DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 338 781 UD 028 412

AUTHOR	Cohen, Barbara E.; van Houten, Therese
TITLE	Follow-Up of Youth Using Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Urban Inst., Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jun 91
NOTE	201p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Urban Institute, Research Paper Sales Office, P.O. Box 7273, Department C, Washington, DC 20044 (#4293, $15.50, prepayment required).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescents; Child Advocacy; *Children; Counseling; Delivery Systems; Followup Studies; *Homeless People; *Outcomes of Treatment; Program Effectiveness; *Runaways; Rural Areas; Suburbs; Urban Areas; Urban Youth; Welfare Agencies; *Youth Agencies; Youth Problems
IDENTIFIERS	Service Delivery Assessment; *Shelters

ABSTRACT

There is an increasing body of literature about runaway and homeless youth, but few studies have investigated what happens to the youth after they use Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers (RHYCs). This study examines the services available and the impact these services have on the youth. Data are analyzed from a survey mailed to all RHYCs operated by federally funded grantees and their subsites. The response rate for the mail survey was 79 percent (269 RHYCs). Four in-depth site visits were made to RHYCs in rural, mid-size urban, and heavily populated urban areas (Cincinnati, Ohio; Cullowhee, North Carolina; San Fransisco, California; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma). Each RHYC offers shelter. Other services usually offered include counseling, recreation, transportation, and advocacy, but a variety of services are available in different locations. On the average, 40 percent of youth served each night were runaways, while 18 percent including those awaiting foster care were considered homeless. Data from the youth served result from telephone interviews (approximately 121) examining the impact of RHYC services. At the time of the interviews, 105 of the youth reported that their lives were better than when they entered the RHYC, but a few found their lives more stressful and difficult. For some youth, the RHYC served as a timely safety valve. The youth's stay in an RHYC is generally brief, and it is not possible to describe its impact fully. It appears that many youth do not take advantage of follow-up services offered. RHYCs appear to help a majority of their clients, but much remains to be done to promote stable living situations. Statistical data are provided in 27 tables and 27 exhibits. Nineteen references are listed. (SLD)

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FOLLOW-UP OF YOUTH USING RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS

Final Report

THE URBAN INSTITUTE
2100 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

Project Report

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FOLLOW-UP OF YOUTH USING RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS

Final Report

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The Urban Institute

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Submitted to:
Administration of Children, Youth and Families
Office of Human Development Services
United States Department of Health and Human Services

June, 1991

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are several people who the authors would like to thank for their assistance in completing the evaluation and preparing this report. Bernard Brown, the project officer from ACYF provided guidance and most helpful suggestions throughout the project. Mary Kilkenny, Bob Ruppe, Janet Dankle and Cheryl Schweitzer from Audits and Surveys were responsible for the locating and interviewing the youth. Jennifer Pack and Gail Shur were responsible for sending, tracking and receiving the mail surveys from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers, Franklin Winters helped in the analysis of youth data and Mildred Woodhouse and Mary Coombs helped in the production of the report. The advisory committee members' comments were of great value in the development of the surveys for both the youth and the sites. The committee members include: June Bucy, Arlene McCormack, Randall Mecham, James Statman and Barbara Whelan.

Our greatest thanks go to the people who participated in the study. The staff at the Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers were helpful in completing surveys, providing sampling lists, helping us locate the youth and allowing us to visit their facilities. The youth were most agreeable and willing to answer the many questions during the telephone interviews.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although there is an increasing body of literature about runaway and homeless youth, few studies have looked at what happens to the youth after they use Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers (RHYCs). This report presents the findings from an evaluation sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. The objectives of the study were to understand the services available to runaway and homeless youth at federally funded RHYCs and the impact that these services may have on the youth.

RHYC Provider Survey

Data on RHYC services was gathered from surveys mailed to all 343 federally funded grantees and any subsites of these grantees. The surveys requested information about the demographics of the youth using the RHYC and about the services that were provided to the youth. The response rate for the mail survey was 79 percent--269 RHYCs. In addition, four in-depth site visits were conducted to RHYCs in Cincinnati, Ohio; Cullowhee, North Carolina; San Francisco, California; and, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. These sites represented rural, mid-size urban and heavily populated urban areas.

The majority of the RHYCs are non-profit social service organizations. The average number of staff working with runaway and homeless youth per site is eight full-time and 7 part-time staff. Although volunteers are used by many sites, they are never the only people responsible for working with the youth.

Runaway and homeless youth are referred to the RHYCs from a variety of sources. A major referral source is the child welfare or protective services agency. As problems among youth increase, an increasing number of child welfare agencies are no longer able to provide adequate services for youth over 12 years of age. These agencies are referring the youth to runaway and homeless youth centers where they know that the youth will have a safe shelter, and receive other services; and where family reunification is a high priority.

Other major referral sources are the juvenile justice system and law enforcement agencies. In some states the juvenile justice system is still authorized to act on "unruly" offenses. These include incorrigible youth, truants and runaways. If a youth is brought to the juvenile justice system, it is at this point that referrals are made to the runaway and homeless youth centers. If a youth is a first time runaway, it is hoped that the services provided by the center will be more influential and helpful to the youth than being locked up in a detention facility.

Self referrals are relatively common at the runaway and homeless youth centers. Youth hear about the centers from friends, from community groups and sometimes even from their schools. Many of the runaway youth have no desire to be out on the streets by themselves and are looking for a safe place to stay until their problems can be resolved.

The service that each RHYC offers is shelter. Every night RHYCs offer an average of 10 beds at their facility, four beds in community "host homes" and four emergency beds elsewhere. While some sites offer as few as two beds, others have more than 300 beds available through community resources. The average number of nights that youth spend at the RHYC is 12 nights. Many centers do have youth who are placed there until they can be successfully placed in a foster home. These youth can spend as much as a full year at the RHYC.

The services offered to the youth include: counseling, education programs, medical screening or health care, recreation, transportation, advocacy and legal assistance. The services most often available on-site include group counseling, family counseling, recreation, transportation and advocacy. Services most often offered by referral include medical care, psychological evaluation, mental health treatment, substance abuse counseling and legal assistance.

While at the RHYC, the majority of the youth participated in individual counseling when it was available. Only 61 percent of the youth participated in family counseling. Although after-care services are available to youth, smaller proportions of the youth take advantage of these services. Only one-half of the youth received individual counseling and 44 percent received family counseling as after-care services.

In our provider survey we asked the centers to estimate the proportions of their clients who were "runaway," "homeless" or neither. Our definition of a runaway was a youth who had been away from home without permission for at least one night, but who has a home to which he/she can and often do return. On the average, 40 percent of the youth served at each site were runaways.

Homeless youth are thought of as those youth who have no home to which they can return. These youth might be part of homeless families, may have been thrown out of their homes and told not to return, or may have left a home in which they no longer felt safe and therefore could not return. Homeless youth were not the youth waiting for foster care placements—they were not wards of the state who had been placed temporarily at the centers. The average proportion of homeless youth at each site was reported to be 18 percent, but after reviewing the site's definitions of homeless youth, we realize that many in this 18 percent are those who are waiting for a foster care placement and have no home to go to. We did not mean to include these youth in our sample and therefore presume that the actual proportion of homeless youth is somewhat less than 18 percent.

Although the youth follow-up study collected data from a sample of runaway and homeless youth who had used the runaway and homeless youth centers, we asked runaway and homeless youth centers to describe their runaway and homeless client populations. The clients were most likely to be White (66%) and female (56%). The centers generally provide services to youth up to the age of 18. As is indicated on Table 3, almost half (46%) of the youth using the centers were between the ages of 15 and 16, slightly more than a third (35%) were 14 years old or younger and exactly one-fifth were 17 years old or older.

Follow-Up Survey of Youth

Data from the youth were collected through telephone interviews conducted with youth who had spent at least one night at a RHYC either 4 to 8 months prior to the interview or 12 to 24 months prior. Youth's names and last known phone numbers were supplied by RHYC staff from sampled RHYCs. Youth were asked to respond to questions about: education, employment, financial security, physical health, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice involvement, family relationships, physical abuse and exploitation, pregnancy and parenthood, and housing. For each section youth were asked to describe their situation at the time at which they entered the RHYC, at the time at which they left the RHYC, and then again since that time. Youth were also asked about the helpfulness and their satisfaction with the provided services.

The study results indicate that the lives of most youth have improved since the time that they stayed at the RHYC. For some, the stay appears to have been the pivotal point that accounts for many of these changes; for others the improvement may have come about simply through maturity, as the outcome of later interventions, or as a result of changes within their families. The study, although designed to determine changes, was not designed to analyze the underlying causes of the changes.

A review of the various change indicators show that approximately three-fourths of the youth improved in most aspects of their lives, regardless of whether or not there had been a prior problem in that area. About the same proportion also state that their lives are better than they were at the time they went to the RHYC. Although most of the youth report improvement, there is also a small core group whose situation has worsened.

There are also some youth (not necessarily those whose overall condition worsened), who are experiencing new problems at the time of the interview that they had not been experiencing prior to the RHYC stay. In many ways, this is not surprising. The youth are older, and are statistically at greater risk for dropping out of school, being arrested, becoming pregnant, etc. What is surprising is the fact that the youth report a decrease in alcohol and drug use. The immediate reaction is that their responses are not truthful. In any research of this kind, this is of course a definite possibility. However, this possibility must be weighed against the apparent honesty and candor displayed by the youth in response to other sensitive questions.

Below is a brief summary of how the youth have fared in each of the 12 areas.

Housing

- Less than half the youth had the same living arrangement at the time of the interview as prior to going to the RHYC and immediately thereafter. Most of these youth returned to the home of at least one parent. In all, 62 percent of the youth are living with a parent at the time of the interview. This number includes ten youth who seem to alternate between the separate homes of both parents.

- Other housing situations, at the time of the interview include living with a spouse, other relatives, friends or foster parents or living in a group home, runaway shelter, residential treatment center, boarding school, maternity home, college dormitory or jobs corps facility. None of the youth appear to be homeless at the time of the interview (prior to going to the RHYC at least two youth reported living on the street and in a car). It is not clear whether the five youth who report living alone have adult supervision.

- Overall, only eight youth say that their housing situation has worsened. For 22 youth, it has remained the same; for 96 youth it has improved.

Family situation

- Over three-fourths of the youth say that conflict with parents is either not a problem or only a minor problem. This includes the 59 youth who, prior to the stay at the RHYC, rated conflict with parents as a "major" or "moderate" problem. Overall, the youth are living in households where, with the exception of housing problems (experienced at both points in time by 11 percent of the families), there have been significantly fewer stressful events in the time since they left the RHYC.

- The overwhelming majority, 105 youth, say that their family situation has improved. For 12 youth, it has remained the same. It has worsened for only four youth.

Physical or sexual abuse

- There has been definite decrease in the proportion of youth who report sexual abuse, defined as "someone doing something sexual to you against your will." Twenty-eight percent report that sexual abuse happened to them some time prior to their stay at the RHYC, including during earlier periods of their childhood. Nine percent report being sexually abused in the time since they left the RHYC.

- In general there appears to have been a decline in physical abuse (by anyone, family member or outsider) from 19 percent prior to the stay at the RHYC to nine percent since then. However, if one looks only at abuse by a family member, there is less of a decrease: 13 percent report prior to the RHYC stay and 11 percent since that time.

- Thirteen of the youth with a prior history of abuse answered a question regarding change in their situation. Only seven of the 13 youth say that their situation has improved. Five youth say that it has remained the same, and one youth say it has become worse.

Financial security

- The majority of the youth, both prior to the RHYC stay and at the time of the interview, are supported either by their parents (79 percent at the time of the interview) or through other legal means such as employment or welfare benefits. At the time of the interview, none of the youth report panhandling or hustling as a means of support.

- For most of the majority (104 youth) having money for necessities is not a major problem at the time of the interview. However, since the stay at the RHYC, this has been a problem for 19 percent of the youth (a slight decrease from the 24 percent for whom this was a problem prior to the RHYC stay).

- Only 11 percent of the youth say that financial security represents a "major" or "moderate" problem. For the other youth, the situation has either remained the same (49 youth) or improved (67 youth).

Education

- Three-fourths of the youth say that their school situation has improved. At the time of the interview, 112 youth are either in school (103 youth) or have graduated or obtained a GED (9 youth). Twenty-seven of the 35 youth with prior education problems (youth who had dropped out, had been expelled or were skipping classes) are enrolled in school on a regular basis or have graduated.

- However, the overall dropout rate has increased from seven percent prior to the RHYC stay to 11 percent at the time of the interview.

Employment

- At the time of the interview, 40 percent of the youth are working (it was not determined whether these are full or part-time jobs). This is a decrease from the 57 percent who say that they were working prior to going to the RHYC. Of 24 youth who have either graduated or dropped out of school, 13 are employed at the time of the interview.

- The question regarding improvement in their employment situation was asked of 66 youth. Only four youth say that their situation has worsened. For over half of the youth (38 youth), employment has improved. It has remained the same for 24 of the 66 youth.

Physical health

- More youth rate their health as being "good" or "excellent" at the time of the interview (107 youth) than at the time they went to the RHYC (89 youth). Nevertheless, about the same number list health problems at the time of the interview (24 youth) as at the time of the RHYC stay (20 youth).

- Over half of the youth say that they get regular medical care (60 percent report getting a check-up in the past year) and dental care (66 percent). Most report usually getting enough to eat (109) youth, but only about half of the youth (55 percent) say that their diet is good.

- Overall, 60 youth say that their health has improved since the time they went to the RHYC, nearly the same number say it has remained the same (this includes youth with no prior health problems), and 12 youth say that their health has deteriorated.

Mental health

- Overall, there appears to be a high level of depression among these youth as evidenced by the high rate of suicide attempts and hospitalizations for mental illness. The rate of suicide attempts prior to the youth's stay at the RHYC was 32 percent. For the months since then, it is 14 percent. Although this is a definite decline, it remains relatively high.

- Overall, three fourths of the youth say that their mental health has improved. In order to get a sense of their mental distress at the time of the interview, the youth were asked a number of questions derived from the Denver Mental Health Assessment. Findings show that on the whole the youth are quite angry. Fifty-three percent say that in the past month they are "often" or "almost" always angry. Only 72 percent say that in the past month they never felt like they didn't want to go on living.

Substance abuse

- The youth report an overall decline in substance abuse. Thirty-one of the 100 youth who were using alcohol prior to their stay at the RHYC say that they have not had a drink since then. This means that 40 youth (37% of 127) have not drank alcohol since leaving the RHYC, or, conversely, that 63 report use. These youth report a general decline in frequency of use with only 9 youth reporting daily or weekly use. Prior to going to the RHYC, 29 youth reported daily or weekly use.

- Drug use shows a similar reduction in use. Forty-eight percent say that prior to going to the RHYC they did not use illegal drugs. At the time of the interview, this number has increased to 67 percent.

- Involvement in drug dealing has also decreased. However, at the time of the interview 11 of the 17 youth who report previously dealing drugs are still involved in dealing.

Sexual behavior

- At the time of the interview, 103 youth (81%) report being sexually active (this is an increase from the 59 percent who report being sexually behavior prior to the RHYC stay). On the whole, the youth appear to be aware of AIDS risk-taking behavior. Forty-three percent say that the RHYC taught them how to protect themselves against AIDS. Over two thirds of the sexually active youth (69%) say that they use condoms. Most of these youth also mention other safe sex practices including: having a steady partner or reducing the number of partners. However, it should be noted that the term "steady partner" was not defined. Nor were any questions asked regarding the number of partners.

Pregnancy and parenthood

- Twice as many young women (17 of the 82 females) have become pregnant in the months since the RHYC stay as were pregnant prior to their stay. On the whole, however, these pregnant young women are doing well; they are getting prenatal care, and all but one say that their situation has improved.

Conclusions

While it is encouraging to note that at the time of the interview so many youth are doing better than when they entered the RHYC, it is distressing to see that for a small group of youth their lives have become more difficult and stressful. A comparison was made between the quartile of youth who at the time of the interview had the greatest number of negative outcomes and all the other youth who were interviewed. It shows that the youth least likely to "succeed" were more likely than the other youth to have entered the RHYCs with either child abuse, parental conflict or health problems. While some of the "successful" youth also entered with these problems, but were able to resolve some of them, it is possible that for some youth there is a need for even more intervention and assistance in successfully resolving major life problems.

For some the RHYC seems to have served as a timely safety valve at a time of crisis. Many are quite explicit that the stay at the RHYC allowed them a chance to sit back and recognize their feelings, to understand their parents' perspective, or to learn new conflict management skills. Some say it kept them from "destroying" themselves through drugs or suicide. However, for others, the link between their current lives and their stay at the RHYC is less clear. Nor can it be fully explored within the context of this study, which is a first attempt to find out what happens to these youth over time.

Since the youth's stay at the shelter is generally brief, there is no expectation that the services offered during that time will provide a resolution for all problems. After-care services are offered to help youth deal more completely with their problems. However, the information collected from the sites, as well as information collected from the youth, indicates that youth do

not often take advantage of these after-care services. Perhaps better outreach or follow-up efforts would increase the participation of the youth in the after-care programs.

Not only would outreach be useful in helping the youth after they leave the RHYC, it also would be helpful in bringing youth into the RHYC who may otherwise never hear about or use the services. Many of the RHYCs are located in remote areas, away from transportation and easy visibility. The majority of the youth get to the RHYCs through referrals from other agencies—juvenile justice systems, law enforcement agencies and child welfare or protective service agencies. It is quite possible that many youth who could benefit from the RHYC services are not in contact with these agencies and therefore never find out about the RHYC services. Possibly increased visibility and outreach would help attract youth who otherwise turn to the streets and the street culture to survive.

According to the data collected from RHYCs, approximately 40 percent of their clients are runaways and somewhat less than 18 percent are homeless. Possibly one-half of the youth staying at RHYCs are placements of the child welfare system. The implications of this are that RHYCs are serving as "temporary" foster placements. According to RHYC staff, many of the kids placed in the RHYC before going to foster homes have been placed in multiple homes without lasting success. Runaway and homeless youth centers were not established to serve as institutions for youth in need of foster care. The main mission of the RHYC is reunification of families and the services are meant to be temporary and focused on resolving the youth's major presenting problems. If an increasing number of beds are used for foster care youth, RHYCs may have to re-examine their missions and their services.

In conclusion, the data suggest that RHYCs are providing a multitude of services and are able to help a majority of their clients improve their situations. Much remains to be done to both prevent the initial crises which prompt youth to run and to promote a stable living situation to keep them from running again.

I. INTRODUCTION

As homelessness remains a serious problem in the United States, there has been an increase in the interest shown to the different subpopulations among the homeless. One such group is youth who have runaway from home or who are homeless. While several studies have been conducted on these youth, there is no consistent definition used to refer to them. Terms used in reference to these youth include homeless, runaways, throwaways, pushouts, system kids, street kids, unaccompanied youth, damaged teens, outcasts and the "catch-all" term, hard to reach youth (Robertson, 1989). At times the terms are used interchangeably, despite the specificity of the groups to which they refer. The two groups believed to be most distinctive are runaways and homeless youth.

Runaway and homeless youth have been defined by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS, 1987). Their definition of a runaway is: a person under 18 years of age who absents himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without the permission of parents or legal guardians. Their definition of a homeless youth is: a person under 18 years of age who is in need of services and without a place of shelter where he or she receives supervision or care. Homeless youth are considered to be those who have no parental, substitute foster or institutional home. Often these youth have left or have been urged to leave with the full knowledge or approval of legal guardians and have no alternative home (National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, 1985).

Runaway and homeless youth appear to be two relatively distinct groups. Runaways are thought of as having chosen to leave a home or to have been kicked out of a home, to which they still have the option to return. Homeless youth no longer have access to their original or alternative home. A recent GAO study (1989) notes differences between youth classified as runaways and those

classifed as homeless. The homeless youth tend to be older, are less likely to be female, and are less likely to be attending school than runaways. Also, homeless youth are more likely to have been away from their legal residences for longer periods than runaways.

However, among those youth considered to be homeless a fair amount of ambiguity still exists with respect to whether they leave home of their own will or under pressure from their parents or guardians. The same GAO study (1989) found that nearly two-thirds of the youth whom they defined as homeless in their study population, were classified as throwaways or pushouts by shelter staff. These terms are used to imply that the youth left home at the encouragement or direction of the parent. Despite this ambiguity, these youth all are without a home to which they can freely return.

This study focuses on the runaway and homeless youth who have used federally funded Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers (RHYCs) within a two year period prior to the survey. The definitions of runaway and homeless youth used in the study are based on the definitions developed by the Administration of Children, Youth and Families. The term runaway youth refers to: youth who have been away from home without permission for at least one night, but have a home to which they can and often do return. Homeless youth refers to: youth who have no home to which they can return.

Although the legislative goals are the same for all RHYC programs, the manner in which they are implemented varies widely. The purposes of the services are four-fold:

1. To alleviate the problems of runaway or homeless youth. To this end, the RHYCs provide shelter, counseling, aftercare (services after the youth returns home or to another placement in the community) and other services.

2. To reunite children with their families and to encourage the resolution of intrafamily problems. This is achieved at least in part by enabling the runaways to establish contact with their families through the RHYCS directly or by means of the National Communications System. In Fiscal Year 1985, slightly over half of the youth returned home (52.4 percent).

3. To strengthen family relationships and encourage stable living conditions for youth. This is achieved through individual, group and family counseling, aftercare and referral to other community agencies (or to other components of the program that sponsors a Runaway and Homeless Youth Center).

4. To help youth decide upon a future course of action. To a great extent, this end is the focus of the counseling that takes place while the youth is still at the center and again during aftercare services. Counseling is directed at helping the youth make plans regarding living arrangements, schooling and employment.

Needless to say, in programs sponsored by a variety of organizational umbrellas and staffed variously by paraprofessionals, clinical social workers, psychologists, health professionals, family counselors, peer counselors etc., there are going to be many methods for trying to reach these goals. One task in this study was to describe and quantify the strategies and characteristics of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers.

Even before the passage of the Runaway Youth Act in 1974, programs had begun to examine the services that they were providing. After a brief fling as "youth-are-always-right" activists in the late sixties, the projects moved into adopting a family dynamics approach to understanding crisis and crisis intervention. The projects worked at becoming community based, at achieving local support. While some projects continued to rely heavily on volunteers and paraprofessionals and an "activist" staff engaged in streetwork, advocacy and other outreach efforts, other programs gradually hired more traditionally trained professional staff and increased "therapeutic" program elements. Today many of the innovations of the alternative youth social service movement have

been incorporated into the traditional social service system. Many of the programs that started out in store fronts and church basements are now providing a wide range of services to a wide range of youth, and other equally effective programs are sponsored by some of the traditional agencies once so distrusted by the alternative movement.

It should be noted that RHYC services are not limited to shelter and counseling and all that that entails. Most RHYCs directly provide or have access to other equally essential services: health and dental care, academic remediation, G.E.D. preparation, recreation, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, life skills training, etc.

To date, most research has been directed at finding out more about the changing populations of youth seen at the RHYCs and at describing the RHYCs. There has been very little research directed at finding out what happens to the youth in the years after they leave the RHYCs. Knowing that many of the runaways return home and stay there for at least awhile after leaving the program is not enough. Considering the current mandates of 1) being cost-effective and 2) keeping youth from further harm (whether from their families or from the streets), it is important to learn more about the long-term impacts of Center services upon the youth they serve.

It is important to find out what happens to those that return home. How permanent is the involvement in street life for those that return to the streets? To what extent does the earning of a G.E.D. lead to ongoing schooling or steady employment? There have been several studies of these youth — all showing positive outcomes for some youth.

One example is a 1985 evaluation of a program designed to serve homeless and street youth at the Orion Center in Seattle, Washington (Urban Policy Research, 1987). "Typical" clients were 17-year old white males without a

fixed address who had spent a year or more on the street. They had experienced a variety of problems, including high levels of physical and sexual abuse, substance misuse and abuse, and emotional disturbances. More than half of the clients were or had been involved in prostitution (especially females who had been on the streets for longer periods of time). During the evaluation period, 104 clients terminated their involvement with the Orion Center. Approximately 40 percent represented clear successes: 1) they were off the streets, 2) they were free from prostitution involvement, and 3)they resided in a stable living situation. (At the other extreme, 16 percent had negative terminations as they were either institutionalized, maintained their prostitution involvement or refused further services, and one youth committed suicide). Youth with successful outcomes required an average of five months between project entrance and case closure. This study as well as others found that the longer the period of homelessness, the more likely the involvement in prostitution and the more difficult the transition to a healthy and stable lifestyle (Dept. of Justice, 1986 ,Boyer, 1986, and McCormack, 1985).

Also in Seattle, the Youth and Community Services Bureau conducted a study for the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (DHHS) on the outcomes of interventions directed at youth involved in prostitution and related street activities (Boyer,1986). Forty boys and girls were tracked over a period of 18 months, with their express consent. Outcomes indicated that with appropriate services 25 to 30 percent can exit from street life. It was also determined that youth who were able to exit had the following characteristics:

- They were older at age of first street involvement.
- They had been on the street for a shorter period of time.
- They had lived with both parents.
- They had lived with families for a longer period of time.
- They were less severely abused or neglected.

There is, of course, a major difference between these studies and the current evaluation. In the earlier studies the researchers, the staff and the youth knew that they would be followed and interviewed at later dates. This study was a retrospective study which relied on RHYC supplied lists of youth who had previously used their services. It is considerably more difficult to track youth in a retrospective follow-up study, which has the potential of introducing serious biases to the study. It is always a possibility that the youth who are not able to be located represent a group with different, if not more difficult, problems.

This report presents the findings of a follow-up study of the youth using RHYCs. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to provide the Family and Youth Service Bureau and the Administration for Children, Youth and Families with information to:

1. Assess the long-term effects of services provided by runaway and homeless youth centers on the development and welfare of such youth;
2. Describe the strategies and characteristics of RHYCs that have been successful in promoting long-term gains; and,
3. Describe the barriers that have hindered the delivery of lasting benefits.

A literature and historical review of the problem is presented in Chapter II, and the study methodology is presented in Chapter III. Chapters IV and V report the results of the evaluation. Chapter IV presents the information collected from the RHYCs about their organization and the youth using their services. Chapter V presents data collected from interviews with youth who have used these RHYCs. A summary of the findings and conclusions are presented in Chapter VI.

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two traditional and popular views of the runaway or homeless youth. The first is the romantic view of the strong, adventurous youth who leaves home to seek his or her fortune. The second is of the youth as a delinquent who has disobeyed his or her parents and runs away out of spite or anger. Although early editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders listed running away as a specific mental disorder, a significant proportion of runaway and homeless youth leave home because of intolerable situations there. This may not only include parental drug or alcohol abuse, but also physical and sexual abuse, neglect and other familial problems. In the past two decades, researchers have come to realize that running away is often a healthy adaptive behavior aimed at extracting the adolescent from an intolerable family situation. On the other hand, research has shown that many runaways also exhibit a long list of diagnosable mental disorders that suggest that for some youth, running away is a maladaptive behavior.

Brennan, et al. (1978) developed a typology of runaways that divides them into two major groups: those who are not highly delinquent and not alienated, and those who are delinquent and alienated. They place "escapists," middle-class loners, and unbonded peer-oriented youths in the not delinquent, not alienated group of runaways. These may run away for reasons like romantic adventures, spontaneous or reactive behavior, etc. The outcomes of their running are ususally not serious, because they have some control over their lives. The group of delinquent, alienated runaways, however, includes rejected pushouts, rebellious and constrained children, and normless, unrestrained youth. These are more likely to run for longer periods and to be caught up in a "street culture", including participation in prostitution, drug use and dealing, and criminal activities.

Nye (1980) also attempted to develop a general explanation to explain runaway behavior. He divides runaways into three types: those who run to increase rewards, those who run to reduce costs, and pushouts. His first category recognizes that children who are relatively healthy and mature do run away from home. He places this group at about 20 percent of all runaways. It includes children who value independence and have an idealized view of the world; these are children who are "running to" an idealized place or situation. On the other hand, those "running from something constitute about 75 percent of the entire runaway population. Nye includes in this group those who may have inappropriate expectations about their own roles in family and community life. That is, they may view school as unnecessary and their role and duties in the family to be "intrinsically unpleasant" and preventive of their doing things more pleasant. However, this group also includes children who are "running from" more objectively onerous lives due to physical or sexual abuse. While they may recognize that life on the streets will not be pleasant, they run because they still believe it is preferable to their current situation in the home.

Nye's final category of runaways is termed "pushouts." According to Nye, these constitute a relatively minor proportion of the total population. They are described as being mostly male and lower class in origin, due to the greater resources of the middle class to lessen the need for interaction with unwanted or difficult children.

Research has proven that, whatever the causes of running away, adolescents who run are confronted with a variety of physical, mental and environmental problems. The 1989 GAO study collected data from Youth Information Forms (YIF) that runaway and homeless youth centers voluntarily submit. Their report, based on the YIF forms returned by approximately 40 percent of the federally

funded shelters summarizes many of the youths' problems. Among the youth in these RHYCs, 61 percent suffer from depression. Forty-three percent acknowledged problems with school, while about one half were not attending any school.

Only 56 percent of the homeless and 66 percent of the runaways were living with two parents before coming to the shelter. In addition to the one-fifth who had self-reported drug or alcohol abuse problems, one-fifth acknowledged juvenile justice problems; 14 percent of the females were either pregnant or had a venereal disease.

Sixty one percent of runaways reported that their principal reason for running was a problem with parents. Over one-third cited parental neglect, and one-fourth reported some kind of physical or sexual abuse. One-fifth blamed the drug or alcohol abuse by a parent as the principal reason for running. Additional problems resulting in running away were other family crises (12%) and juvenile justice problems (4%).

The study confirms that running away is usually a short-term phenomenon. Only 16 percent of the children in the RHYCs were more than 50 miles from home. Among runaways, the average time away from home before reporting to the center was less than five days. Homeless children, on the other hand were twice as likely to have been away from their families for more than 11 days.

Many other studies also document that runaway and homeless children suffer from a wide variety of problems. For example, the study of 96 Los Angeles children (Mundy, Robertson, Robertson and Greenblatt) found that this group had an average of 2.3 psychotic symptoms, with 30 percent presenting with four or more such symptoms. Nearly a quarter had received in-patient treatment for mental health prblems, and another 23 percent had received out-patient mental health treatment. Over half (52%) reported that they had been physically hurt

by a family member. Fifty-one percent said they felt neglected by parents. A total of 62 out of the 96 youth had reported some type of physical abuse.

Shaffer and Caton's (1984) study of 118 male and female runaways in New York City also indicates that this population has multiple risks and multiple negative outcomes. Only 12 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls in this group were not diagnosed as depressed or antisocial. Thirty-two percent had a past suicide attempt. One-half had spent at least some time in foster care. Another one-fifth had spent time in an institution. The high rates of alcohol use and expulsion from school for alcohol use have already been mentioned.

Yates et al. (1988) also suggests the multiple problems faced by runaway and homeless youth. In their group of homeless 13 to 17 year old runaways from a Los Angeles outpatient medical clinic, 79.3 percent reported that they had been homeless more than once. Only 15.2 percent had been to a runaway and homeless shelter. In addition to their very high alcohol and drug use, 20 percent reported violence in their household, and 22.1 percent reported violence against themselves. Over 23 percent said they left home due to an alcohol-related problem of a parent or guardian. Nearly one-half (48.9%) said that at least one biological parent had an alcohol problem. Another 20 percent said that another person in the household, usually a stepparent, had an alcohol problem.

Van Houten and Golembiewski (1978) in their nationwide study of 600 runaways and 300 non-runaways, reported that over 80 percent of the runs occurred because of family problems. Only one-third of the runaways were from homes with both natural parents. Parental alcohol abuse was identified as the biggest prediction factor in running. Other factors were age, density of the home town, family breakdown and school failure. Juvenile justice involvement and parental rejection were also correlated with running, but there was also a high correlation between these two problems and parental alcohol use.

Janus, McCormack, Burgess and Harman (1987) have cited the high levels of physical and sexual abuse among homeless and runaway children. Powers and Jaklitsch (1989) quote other studies which indicated the high incidence of maltreatment among runaways. For example, Farber et al (1984) found that 75 percent of a group of 199 runaways had been subjected to severe maltreatment.

The frequency with which familial, mental health and similar problems appear among homeless and runaway youth suggests that running away is a much more complicated behavior than previously recognized. In explaining adolescent use of drugs and alcohol, Baumrind (1987) places heavy importance upon the concept of risk-taking, which "characterizes normal adolescent development". Furthermore, risk-taking is a critical skill that adolescents must develop if they are to grow to be competent adults. Drug and alcohol use are thus seen as one avenue in which the risk taking may express itself.

However, with runaway behavior, far more serious factors than simple risk-taking come into play. The very high prevalence of family problems, family substance abuse, and mental health problems among the runaways themselves suggest that the majority of runaways result from more serious factors than a youth's simple desire to take risks. The numerous negative problems among runaway and homeless youth puts them at risk not only of continued homelessness, but also of AIDS, suicide, and other negative social, health, and economic outcomes.

Currently, there are approximately 300 Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers that receive federal funding through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Bill of 1974 as amended by Public Law 98473). RHYCs are located in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands.

The first of these RHYCs came into existence in the late sixties and early seventies in response to the needs of youth who were flocking to counterculture havens such as San Francisco, Boston and Washington, D.C. Later they emerged in university cities such as Ann Arbor, urban centers such as New York and San Diego and "fun" cities such as Daytona. Initially, the programs lived isolated existences receiving less publicity than free clinics and drug hotlines, but operating in the same nontraditional atmosphere within the same philosophy, of open intake and willingness to listen and to let youth make, and accept responsibility for, their own choices. Gradually, through the same network that told the youth about these programs, the programs learned about each other. As the counterculture movement became more disjointed, the RHYCs became more sophisticated and organized in their efforts to provide the best possible services to the youth they were seeing—youth who, then as now, fell outside the parameters of traditional social services.

A Federal policy on runaways and homeless youth was not articulated until the 1970s. Until then, policy on these problems was largely considered the domain of the individual states. Legally, states generally divided this population into two groups: delinquents, who committed crimes, and "unruly" children, or status offenders, who were guilty of offenses specific to children. These included truancy, running away from home, promiscuity, etc. Nevertheless, "unruly" children could still be and regularly were sentenced to detention—"reform schools"—for these offenses.

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on a case that came to be known as "in re Gault". Gerald Gault was a 15-year-old Arizonian who had been found guilty of making an obscene telephone call. He was sentenced for this crime to 6 years in the Arizona State Reform School. The evidence was largely hearsay, and, had he been an adult, the maximum sentence would have been 60 days in jail

or a $50 fine. The Supreme Court, in this case, affirmed the rights of juveniles to counsel, to confront witnesses, and to avoid self-incrimination (Mann, 1980). Other cases in the sixties broadened juveniles' rights in juvenile court proceedings.

The Supreme Court decisions resulted in a 1968 revision of the Uniform Juvenile Court Act, originally passed in 1925. This revision gave greater legal strength to the concept of the status offender, recognizing that status offenses should not be in the same category as criminal offenses.

In 1971, national attention was brought to the needs and problems of runaway youth with the introduction of the 1971 Runaway Youth Act by Senator Birch Bayh. The Act which would have provided authorization for the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to make grants to localities and to nonprofit agencies to establish, strengthen, or fund existing or proposed runaway centers, died in the House of Representatives.

In 1972, the first national runaway conference was hosted by The Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota and funded by the Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Administration. Sixty runaway programs met to discuss the problems and needs of runaway youth, to develop strategies to increase the national awareness of the problem, and to increase the amount of resources allocated to the problem. Many of the programs present at that first conference are still in existence, as is the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services that grew out of that conference and was formally established in 1974.

That same year, President Ford signed the Runaway Youth Act, Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Bill of 1974 (PL 93-415). This act further contributed to the decriminalization of status offenders. In response to the growing reports on the unmet needs of runaway youth, the Runaway Youth Act (Title III of PL-93-415) was aimed at establishing a series

of runaway centers to provide services to runaways. This part of the Act has been administered by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The location of this part of the bill in DHHS, rather than the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, is further evidence of the desire of Congress to distinguish between delinquent activities and status offenses.

Although the Runaway Youth Act made money available to local units of government, a high priority was given to existing runaway centers. Eligibility requirements included: a location that was easily accessible to the runaways; an agreement to contact parents; acceptance of self-referrals (a young person could choose for herself or himself whether to seek services without the necessary approval, agreement, or knowledge of an adult), adequate plans for reconciliation with the parents or for an appropriate placement if family reconciliation was not possible.

The requirements and restrictions of certain funding sources could affect type of service delivery. RHYCs receive funding from a variety of sources: local United Ways; foundations; businesses; departments of social services; and, grants from state and local governments. Yet, regardless of funding sources, a key characteristic of runaway programs has always been their nonjudgmental approach, their avoidance of labels, their willingness to "go to bat" for a young person in the courts, the schools, and with the family, if need be.

It is therefore not surprising that the youth seen at runaway shelters soon included other youth outcasts for whom few if any other services exist (for instance, juveniles involved in prostitution and homeless youth for whom there is no home to return to). To meet their needs and the increasingly complex issues of repeat runaways, RHYCs have experimented with additional

services: medical and dental care, G.E.D. training, life skills and emancipation training, alternative schooling, long-term group homes, a day program for teenage parents, a shelter for young girls involved in prostitution, employment training, counseling for gay and lesbian youth, and suicide prevention.

The first year of funding (1977) provided money for 130 of the known 160 runaway centers across the country. Funding increased from about $5 million in 1977 to about $25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 1989. The Act now funds over 350 community-based programs. In 1977, recognizing that homeless youth were a significant and particularly needy segment of the population served by the runaway shelters, Congress amended the Runaway Youth Act to include services to otherwise homeless youth and modified the title of the Runaway Youth Act to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. It also provided that grants be made equitably among the states based on their respective populations and authorized a National Communications System. The Act was again amended by PL 96-509, the Juvenile Justice Amendments of 1980 to be renamed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

III. STUDY METHODOLOGY

Given the study objectives of understanding the services available through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers (RHYCs) and the impact of these services on the youth using them, the evaluation was designed to collect data directly from all RHYCs that receive federal funding as well as from a sample of youth who had used these RHYCs.

In order to interview a total of 400 youth, 25 RHYCs were sampled from the universe of 343 RHYCs currently receiving federal funding. From these 25 sites, four were selected to provide more in-depth information about their organizations and the youth using them. These four sites were also used as the sites at which a subsample of the youth chosen to participate in the study were asked to take part not only in the regular follow-up interview, but in an in-depth interview as well. Initially the intent was to complete 400 follow-up interviews and 36 in-depth interviews.

The final sample consisted of 127 youth from 15 sampled RHYCs in 13 states. These states represented all 10 HHS regions. The number of youth interviewed per region ranged from 3 youth in Region II to 25 youth in both Regions IV and V. The participating shelters were located in the following 13 states: California, Florida, Kansas, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Wyoming. New Hampshire and Florida each had 2 participating RHYCs. Circumstances which limited the sample to 127 youth and 15 sites are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

A. Runaway and Homeless Youth Center Survey

Methodology

Using lists provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, 343 RHYCs were informed about the evaluation and asked to complete a mail survey.

A review of the lists made it clear that the organizational configuration of sites included grantees who provided their own direct services in one site, grantees who provided services in more than one site, and grantees who were not providing any direct services but had subgrantees providing the services in one or more sites. Since only service providers were being asked to complete the survey, all organizations on the list were sent a letter explaining the possible configurations with instructions for surveys to forward the survey to the direct service provider or providers under each grant. The organizational configurations are as follows:

1. Single grant - Single site. Program receives one grant and operates one runaway and homeless youth center.

2. Single grant - several subsites. Program receives one grant but runs more than one facility for runaway and homeless youth at different locations (in same town, county or region).

3. Single grant - several subgrantees. There are two different situations:

   (a) Program receives one grant and does not directly run a runaway and homeless youth center, but channels funds into two or more different organizations that run separate facilities. Usually all of these are linked through a formal or informal network or coalition.

   (b) Same as definition #3a, except that the grantee also runs a runaway and homeless youth center.

4. Two grants for one organization. Organization receives more than one grant and each grant covers a separate runaway and homeless youth center.

If sites did not return the mail survey within the allotted time period, a second round of surveys was distributed and follow-up telephone calls were made to the sites to encourage their participation. The final response rate was 79 percent—a final sample of 269 RHYCs.

Problems Encountered in Data Collection

Data collection from the RHYCs was more time consuming than initially anticipated. The problems encountered when collecting site data included difficulty in all locating RHYCs enumerated on the list and convincing the RHYCs once located to complete and return the surveys. Surveys were mailed to all RHYCs after the study was introduced to them in a letter and in a bulletin published by the runaway youth network. Many of the surveys in the first mailing were returned by the post office due to incorrect addresses. The Urban Institute staff called local telephone directories and regional offices to get updated addresses for all RHYCs. A few weeks after the surveys should have been received by the RHYCs, Urban Insititute staff placed follow-up calls to those RHYCs who had not yet returned the completed survey. When necessary a second mailing was sent to the sites with a follow-up letter. The effort needed to obtain a response rate of 79 percent was more labor intensive than was initially anticipated.

Although the survey was developed to collect comparative data from all RHYCs, one problem that arose was the inconsistencies between the format in which RHYCs kept data and the format in which the survey requested data. For example, many RHYCs used different age categories or did not have information differentiating youth who were runaways and homeless from all other residents (for example, foster caqre children in temporary emergency placement). Urban Institute staff received many telephone calls explaining the differences in the ways in which RHYCs recorded their data and requesting clarification of what was being asked for in the survey. Often, best guesses were made to complete the survey. In addition, definitions of runaway and homeless youth were not clearly stated in the survey. As RHYCs were completing and returning the survey it became evident that the definitions used by RHYCs differed from eachother as well as from the definition intended by the researchers.

Study Limitations

Other aspects of the study design and data collection efforts presented limitations that must also be considered before interpreting the results. The first is that the study was designed to only collect data from federally funded RHYCs. It is possible that other, non-federally funded sites, might attract a slightly different population of runaway and homeless youth, who therefore may not be included in this sample. Since even federally-funded sites were not mandated to participate in this evaluation, the information collected on the RHYC services, as well as that collected on the youth using these services, only comes from sites who were willing to respond. It is possible that those sites who refused to participate in the study might provide different services or serve different youth. This does not imply that those sites refusing to participate provide fewer or less developed services. In fact, sites may have not been able to participate due to numerous factors including being too busy providing services to youth. However, it is important to remember that the data collected on RHYC services comes from 269 of 343 RHYCs (79%) and the youth data from only 127 youth from 15 different RHYCs in the continental United States. The data were not weighted and therefore are not considered to accurately represent all runaway and homeless youth.

B. Follow-Up Survey of Youth Using Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers

Methodology

There were two stages to the sampling plan developed for the follow-up survey. The first stage was the sampling of the 25 sites from which the youth would then be sampled. The sampling plan devised provided adequate regional representation by first dividing the RHYCs into three groups--urban, rural, and superurban--and then using HHS regions to further classify the grantees in

these three groups into regional sampling groups.

A random sample of 25 grantees was drawn to represent the stratifications above. Assuming a possible 10 percent non-cooperation rate, a backup of 19 grantees was also drawn (one per each combined geographical and regional group). Ultimately there were 12 urban sites, eight rural sites and five superurban sites. The following is the initial list of sampled sites.

Urban:

HHS 1:	Child and Family Services, Manchester, NH
HHS 2:	Equinox, Albany, NY
HHS 3:	Youth in Action, Chester, PA
HHS 4:	Alternative Human Services, St.Petersburg, FL
	Child and Family Services, Knoxville, TN
HHS 5:	Advisory Centers (The Bridge), Grand Rapids, MI
	New Life YOuth Services, Cinninnati, OH
HHS 6, 7 & 8:	Youth Services for Oklahoma Co., Oklahoma City, OK
	Catholic Family Services, Amarillo, TX
	Middle Earth Unlimited, Austin, TX
HHS 9 & 10:	YMCA of San Diego County, San Diego, CA
	Stepping Stone, Santa Monica, CA

Rural:

HHS 1 & 2:	Family of Woodstock, Kingston NY
HHS 3:	Aid in Dover, Dover, DE
HHS 4:	Mountain Youth Resources, Cullowhee, NC
HHS 5:	Evergreen House, Bemidji, MN
HHS 6:	Youth and Family Services, El Reno, OK
HHS 7 & 8:	United Methodist Youthville, Salina, KS
	Attention Home, Cheyenne, WY
HHS 9 & 10:	Yuma Child Abuse and Neglect, Yuma, AZ

Superurban:

HHS 1 & 2:	Educational Alliance, NY, NY
HHS 3 & 4:	Youth Emergency Service, Philadelphia, PA
HHS 5:	Youth Network Council, Chicago, IL
HHS 6,7 & 8:	Harris Co Children's Services, Houston, TX
HHS 9 & 10:	Youth Advocates (Huckleberry House), San Francisco, CA

From among the 25 grantees in our sample we purposively chose four to serve as in-depth study sites. These were representative of various types and

geographical locations of grantees. The case study sites included: New Life Youth Services in Cincinnati, OH (urban); Mountain Youth Resources in Cullowhee, NC (rural); Huckleberry House in San Francisco, CA (superurban); and Youth Services for Oklahoma County in Oklahoma City, OK (urban). Fifteen out of the 25 sites agreed to participate in the study, with two subsitute sites in Trenton, NJ and Eugene, OR (see section V-A for list of participating sites).

The second stage of the sampling design consisted of drawing the sample of respondents to be interviewed. Explicit instructions were sent to the 25 sites on how to draw the sample of youth to be interviewed. To be eligible to participate in the study a youth must have been a <u>former runaway or homeless youth to whom at least one night of shelter was provided in the past two years</u>. The sample was selected from two groups of these clients—those who received shelter 4 to 8 months prior to the sampling date, and those who received shelter 12 to 24 months prior to the sampling date. Excluded were youth who received shelter and other services 9 to 12 months prior as well as youth who received shelter, but who were not runaways or homeless youth.

Two sampling lists were drawn from each site. The sampling lists were lists of the eligible universe of youth from which a staff member at each site drew the names of the youth who would be in the final sample. The first list included the names of all the runaway and homeless youth who received at least one night of shelter 4 to 8 months prior to the sampling date. The second list included the names of those youth who received at least one night of shelter 12 to 24 months prior to the smapling date. Each site was instructed to draw a specific number of names from each list. The exact number to be drawn from each list and the skip interval to be used in developing the sample was dependent on the number of youth using the center during each of the two time intervals.

Youth data forms were completed by site staff for all the youth included in the sample. These forms provided information to help the interviewers locate and interview the youth. The form was developed so that identifying information on non-participating youth could be removed, but other basic demographic and service-using information would still be available for use in analysis of the non-participants. Some of the sampled sites indicated that they wished to obtain parental consent before giving the interviewers clients' names.

Once the samples from each site were finalized, interviewers attempted to locate the youth over the telephone and interviewed them whenever possible. Presented below is the chronology of procedures initially intended to be used to locate respondents. Due to limited resources tracking procedures were limited to family, friends, old places of residence, last place of employment and local schools.

Interviewers first called any telephone numbers that were made available to the interviewer. If the respondent no longer lived at the household, interviewers were to attempt to get his/her current telephone number from a relative still living there. In a case where the entire household had moved, the telephone company was likely to have a record of the new number. In the case of nonpublished numbers, the telephone operator would be asked to call the respondent and ask him/her to return the call collect. Where the above procedures would not work, local directories were checked for the same last name (possibly, a relative). Very often neighborhood schools were able to provide helpful information in locating the youth.

When youth were located and participation was agreed upon, interviewers either conducted the interview at that time or scheduled an interview for a more convenient time. Respondents were paid $10.00 for completing the interview and another $10.00 for completing the in-depth interview.

The youth were interviewed regarding the following 12 areas of functioning and well-being: education, employment, financial security, physical health, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice involvement, family relationships, physical abuse and exploitation, pregnancy and parenthood, and housing. For each section, youth were asked to describe their situation at the time at which they entered the RHYC and at the time at which they left the RHYC. In addition they were asked to indicate whether there was a positive or negative change in their situation, in each of the above areas, since they went to the RHYC. For the education, housing and financial security modules, the youth were also asked to indicate their situation immediately after leaving the RHYC.

For nine of the 12 areas, staff were asked to indicate whether this was a presenting problem for the youth. If yes, the youth was asked questions regarding the services and referrals provided by the RHYC for that specific problem. These youth were also asked to indicate how helpful services were and what changes occurred as a result of these services.

Problems Encountered in Data Collection

There were a few major problems encountered in the data collection from the youth. The pilot test of the instrument and data collection procedures indicated that site staff were reluctant to release the names of the youth using their facilities. Due to this reluctance, procedures were changed allowing the site staff to obtain parental consent whenever possible before providing the names to the researchers. However, in order to participate, a site had to agree to provide the names of the youth for whom staff were unable to locate the parents. Although this change of procedures, along with an intensive effort to encourage and enroll sites, increased the willingness of sites to participate in the study, only 15 sites sent in sampling lists (see

section V-A for list of participating sites). Due to a lack of time and resources, researchers were unable to continue the intensive efforts required for enrolling the additional 10 sites in the study.

The second major problem faced was that of tracking and locating the youth. We tried to locate 322 youth. Approximately 41 percent of the youth were never found and another 11 percent who were located never returned the phone call to the interviewer and were not able to be located again. Approximately four percent were located but were unable to be interviewed since they were incarcerated or institutionalized. Only four percent of the sample directly refused to be interviewed. Information provided by the runaway and homeless youth centers was often outdated and therefore not helpful. Interviewers were left to rely on telephone directories, school records and other tracking methods. Once again, time and resources limited the tracking methods interviewers could use. At times it took as many as 56 calls to locate a youth. Schools and parents who agreed to cooperate were the most helpful in tracking the youth. Those youth unlocated most often left no trail behind them as they, and sometimes their families, moved frrom place to place.

In order to locate the youth, interviewers had to be available to make calls at all hours of the day and night. Given the work schedules of the interviewers, this often meant that the first or even second person to try to locate a youth was not necessarily the same person who conducted the interview. This proved to be a problem for the interviewers who were trying to develop a relationship of trust with the people helping to locate the youth or youth themselves. Although the number of refusals on the part of the youth is low, this lack of a prior connection or growing relationship may have contributed to the difficulties interviewers faced in contacting the youth.

Although these problems were recognized early in the data collection phase, the two possible solutions would have been to either spend much more time attempting to locate already sampled the youth or to draw samples from additional sites and to try to locate those youth. Given the limited time frame and resources available for the study, these solutions were not viable. Therefore, the data presented in this report only reflects the data gathered from a total of 127 youth, and should not be used to represent all runaway and homeless youth.

Study Limitations

Although RHYCs are technically set-up to serve both homeless and runaway youth, the youth they consider to be homeless were often those placed there by child welfare agencies for temporary shelter until a foster home pacement could be made successfully. These youth were not considered part of this study's sample. The homeless youth, often referred to as street kids, were not usually found at RHYCs. Even if they did receive services at the RHYC, street youth were not visible in our sample in that our sample was limited to those youth who we were able to locate, usually at home or through the help of a family member. Therefore, although the study was designed to include both runaway and homeless youth, the majority of the sample were runaways.

Staff who selected the youth samples were asked to: a) provide the following information on each sampled youth: age, gender, race/ethnicity, date youth stayed at the shelter; and b) to report up to three presenting problems based on information in the youths' case records at the RHYC. In addition, we have information on the type of shelter (urban or rural) where the youth received services. And, of course, we have information on the proportion of youth in the two sampling categories: (1) youth who stayed at a shelter four to eight months ago; and (2) youth who stayed at a shelter 12 to 24 months ago. It

is therefore possible to make some limited comparisons between the 127 youth whom we were able to interview and the 195 whom we were unable to interview.

Length of Time Since Youth Stayed at the RHYC

We located and interviewed the same proportion (39%) of the youth whose RHYC stay occurred four to eight months ago as of those whose RHYC stay occurred 12 to 24 months ago. In the four to eight month sampling category, 18 of 46 youth interviewed were male, and 28 were female. In the 12 to 24 month category, 26 of 80 interviewed youth were male and 54 were female. This indicates that we had greater difficulty finding females in the 12 to 24 month category.

Gender

The total sample consisted of 114 boys and 189 girls. For 19 of the non-interviewed youth, the RHYCs did not indicate their gender. We located and interviewed 45 of the 114 boys, and 82 of the 189 females.

Age

The mean age for both the interviewed and non-interviewed youth was 15 at the time that they went to the RHYC. In both groups, the mean age for the boys was 15. However, for the females there was a difference in mean age: while it was 15 for the girls whom we interviewed, it was 16 for the girls whom we were unable to interview.

Race/Ethnicity

The racial composition of the total sample was as follows: white (236 of 319), African American (53 of 319), Hispanic (18 of 319), Native American (9 of 319), and Asian (3 of 319). For three of the non-interviewed youth, no data were available on the youth's race/ethnicity. The racial composition of the interviewed sample was similar: white 103 of 127, African American 13 of 127, Hispanic 6 of 127, Native American 3 of 127, Asian 2 of 127. We located and

interviewed 50% of the Hispanic youth, 44% of the white youth, 33% of the Asian and Native American youth, but only 25% of the African American youth in the total sample. In general, we had more difficulty locating urban youth than we had locating youth in rural areas. Since most of the African American youth were located in urban areas, it is possible that the low representation of African American youth in the sample was influenced by this difficulty.

Location of the RHYCs

Even though 73 percent of the interviewed youth had stayed at shelters in urban areas, we were somewhat less successful in locating and interviewing youth from urban than from rural areas. Of the total number of sampled youth who stayed in urban RHYCs, we located and interviewed only 37.5 percent. On the other hand, we able to locate and interview 46 percent of those who had stayed at a rural RHYC.

Presenting Problems

We were unable to find and interview 77 percent of the 35 youth for whom housing was identified as a presenting problem. These are youth whom RHYC staff described as having "experienced bouts of homelessness" or having been "abandoned by their parents." We were also able to locate and interview only one of the five young women for whom pregnancy or parenthood was listed as a presenting problem.

Despite the differences or similarities between the interviewed and non-interviewed youth, the fact that the youth who were interviewed were most likely to either be living at home or at least to be in touch with family members might indicate a bias in our sample. These youth may have been more successful at resolving their issues than others who either remained homeless, became incarcerated or were otherwise institutionalized.

IV. SERVICE PROVIDER SURVEY FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the mail surveys received from 269 of the 343 federally funded Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers (RHYCs). Program directors were asked to complete a survey describing the history of the RHYC, the youth that stayed at the RHYC and the services that were available to these youth. Specific questions were asked about the runaway and homeless youth who use their services.

A. Origination of Programs

The majority (82%) of runaway and homeless youth centers are one component of a larger organization. These organizations are non-profit social service or mental health organizations, public or government social service of mental health agencies or other non-profit organizations. Sixty-five percent (65%) of runaway and homeless youth centers are run under the auspices of a non-profit social service or mental health organization. Other agencies to which the centers are connected include other types of non-profit agencies (24%), and public or government organizations (18%).

Table 3.1

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTER PROGRAM START-UP DATE (quartiles)

Start-Up Date	Proportion of Sites
1968 to 1974	25%
1974 to 1979	25
1979 to 1984	25
1984 to 1988	25

The oldest runaway and homeless youth program began in 1968 and the newest programs (4.5 percent of programs) began in 1988. As is indicated in Table 3.1 most programs are at least six years old—over three-fourths of all programs were founded before 1984.

Funding under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act was first available to runaway centers in 1974. Seven percent of all sites received some federal funds that year. Approximately one-fourth of all sites received federal funds before 1978 and one-fourth have only been receiving funds since 1986 (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

DATE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS FIRST RECEIVED FEDERAL FUNDING (quartiles)

Date Federal Funding was First Received	Proportion of Sites
1970 to 1978	25%
1978 to 1983	25
1983 to 1986	25
1986 to 1988	25

B. Description of Youth Using Runaway and Homeless Youth Centers

In the 1960s runaway and homeless centers were started as store fronts, church basements or other floor space where young people could "crash" for a night or more. The youth using these centers might have considered themselves to have runaway from home, but few would have used the terms runaway or homeless to describe themselves. As the centers and the populations using them became established the term "runaway" also became a familiar word. In 1977,

as the Runaway Youth Act was reauthorized as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, there was official recognition of the growing and distinct population of "homeless" youth. Currently, there is a growth in a population of youth who are not considered to be homeless or runaways. These are youth who are waiting to be placed by the state in foster care. With a shortage of adequate placements, many of these youth are placed in runaway and homeless youth centers or other such organizations to stay until a proper placement can be found. At times this is a matter of days and at times it is a matter of months.

In our provider survey we asked the centers to estimate the proportions of their clients who were "runaways," "homeless" or neither. Our definition of a runaway was a youth who had been away from home without permission for at least one night, but has a home to which he/she can and often does return. On the average, 40 percent of the youth served at each site were runaways.

Homeless youth are thought of as those youth who have no home to which they can return. These youth might be part of homeless families, may have been thrown out of their homes and told not to return, or may have left a home in which they no longer felt safe and therefore could not return. Homeless youth were not the youth waiting for foster care placements—they were not wards of the state who had been placed temporarily at the centers. The average proportion of homeless youth at each site was reported to be 18 percent.

In follow-up telephone calls to sites with high proportions of homeless youth we discovered that sites were using their own definitions of homeless youth. Most of the sites with many homeless youth included youth who were wards of the state and were waiting for foster care placements as homeless youth. Therefore, we do not know that actual proportion of homeless youth at each site, according to our definition as stated above, but we do know that it

is less than the 18 percent reported. Additionally, we know that there were more than 42 percent of the youth at each site who were reported to be neither runaways nor homeless youth. In many sites these youth were those waiting for foster care placements, while in some sites they were youth who had run away from home but were reconciled with their families in less than 12 hours.

Although the youth follow-up study collected data from a sample of runaway and homeless youth who had used the runaway and homeless youth centers, we asked runaway and homeless youth centers to describe their runaway and homeless client populations. Table 3.3 presents the demographic characteristics of the runaway and homeless youth using the centers. They were most likely to be white (66%) and female (56%). The centers generally provide services to youth up to the age of 18. As is indicated on Table 3.3, almost half (46%) of the youth using the centers were between the ages of 15 and 16, slightly more than a third (35%) were 14 years old or younger and one-fifth were 17 years old or older.

C. Client Referral

Runaway and homeless youth are referred to or find their way to the centers from a variety of sources. As is indicated in Table 3.4, a major referral source is the child welfare or protective services agency. Given the misunderstanding of the definition of homeless youth, it is possible that a portion of these referrals are for those youth waiting to be placed in foster care. As problems among youth increase, an increasing number of child welfare agencies are no longer able to provide adequate services for youth over 12 years of age. These agencies are referring the youth to runaway and homeless youth centers where they know that the youth will have a safe shelter, receive other services and family reconciliation is a high priority.

Table 3.3

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH
USING RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS
AS REPORTED BY THE CENTERS
(percentages)

	Runaway and Homeless Youth
Age	
Under age 13	7
Age 13	10
Age 14	18
Age 15	23
Age 16	23
Age 17	15
Age 18 and over	5
Race/Ethnicity	
Black, non-Hispanic	19
White, non-Hispanic	66
Of Hispanic origin	8
Asian	2
Other	5
Gender	
Male	43
Female	56

Other major referral sources are the juvenile justice system and law enforcement agencies. In some states the juvenile justice system is still authorized to act on "unruly" offenses. These include incorrigible youth, truants and runaways. In some states, being a runaway is an offense for which a youth could be locked up in a secure facility for up to five days. After a youth is away from home without permission for 12 hours, parents can notify the police and generate a runaway complaint or a warrant. After a warrant is issued and the youth is found, he or she will either be brought to the runaway and homeless youth center directly by the police or to the juvenile detention facility as a "status offender". If a youth is brought to the juvenile justice system, it is at this point that referrals are made to the runaway and homeless youth centers. If a youth is a first time runaway it is hoped that the services provided by the center will be more beneficial to the youth than being locked up in a detention facility.

Self referrals are relatively common at the runaway and homeless youth centers. Youth hear about the centers from friends, from community groups and sometimes even from their schools. Many of the runaway youth have no desire to be out on the streets by themselves and are looking for a safe place to stay until their problems can be resolved. One special service is the establishment of and advertisement of "safe places". These are businesses in the community which have agreed to offer youth a safe place to stay while they wait for a shelter volunteer to pick them up and bring them to the shelter. Outreach activities alert youth to the existence of these places.

Table 3.4

REFERRAL SOURCES OF RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH
AND PROPORTIONS REFERRED FROM EACH SOURCE
(percentages)

	Runaway and Homeless Youth
Self-referral	14
RHYC outreach workers	3
Juvenile justice system	11
Law enforcement agency	13
Child welfare/protective services agency	21
Parent or legal guardian	10

D. Capacity for Services

While the size of the client population at the runaway and homeless youth centers varied from 2 - 3,591 youth, the average number of youth served at a center was 352 youth in a 12 month period. The breakdown between the sites is as follows: 25 percent served 155 youth or less; 25 percent served between 156 and 240 youth; 25 percent served between 241 and 415 youth and 25 percent served between 416 and 3,591 youth. One tenth of all sites served between 750 and 3,591 youth. The client populations include all youth using the center, whether they be runaways, homeless youth or other clients.

The average number of staff specifically working with the runaways and homeless youth is eight full-time staff and seven part-time staff. For both full and part-time categories this ranged from 0 - 64 staff. There were some sites that relied solely on part time staff and some that relied solely on full-time staff. Although volunteers are used by many sites, they are never

the only people responsible for working with the youth. Since outreach is such as important component of the program, 70 percent of all programs have some full-time staff with some streetwork or outreach experience and 40 percent have some part-time staff with this experience.

The one service that each runaway and homeless youth center offers is shelter. To understand the capacity of the centers to provide shelter to runaway and homeless youth we asked them to report on the number of beds they have for the youth, in their facility or elsewhere in the community (i.e. other host homes), as well as to estimate the number of beds occupied on an average night. Table 3.5 presents this information.

Every night centers offer an average of 10 and a maximum of 60 beds at their facility, an average of four and maximum of 343 beds in community "host homes" and an average of four and a maximum of 150 emergency beds elsewhere. The range of beds available suggests the magnitude of the differences between center capacities as well as the importance of a strong community network and support. There were some sites that only had beds available in a host home, while some only had beds on-site.

The use of the available beds on an average night indicates that although there may be many beds available in the community, the majority of youth stay at the runaway and homeless youth center. The mean number of available beds reported to be used was eight out of ten available beds used on an average night. Only 1 bed is used on average in both community host homes and emergency beds elsewhere. These ranges, 0-15 and 0-90 respectively, are much lower than the availability ranges, suggesting less need for these alternative arrangements.

Although beds are available on most nights, over half of the centers had to refuse shelter to a youth solely because all beds were filled. While some centers separate the "child welfare placements", the "runaways" and the "homeless" youth, others shelter all youth together. As the number of child welfare placements at RHYCs grow, the total bed availability for runaways at these sites might decrease.

There is great variance in the number of nights that any one youth is allowed to stay at a runaway and homeless youth center. Some centers allow youth to stay for up to a year, but on the average the maximum time that a youth can stay is 32 nights. While the mean number of nights a youth can stay at a center is 32, the mean number of nights that youth usually stay is 12. Once again, this ranges between youth spending no nights at a center (they are either placed in host homes or reconciled with parents before nightfall) and spending every night of the year there. Although the surveys focused on runaway and homeless youth, it is possible that staff included the welfare placements in this question. These placements are generally longer-term than the average runaway or homeless youth's stay. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act legislated a maximum stay of 15 nights per youth, and so it is assumed that the longer stays either refer to the child welfare placements or to youth services which are co-funded by sources other than the federal government.

Table 3.5

SHELTER BED AVAILABILITY AND USAGE ON AN AVERAGE NIGHT
(means and ranges)

	Bed Availability		Bed Usage	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
In Shelter	10	0 - 60	8	0 - 60
In community "host homes"	4	0 - 343	1	0 - 15
Emergency beds elsewhere	4	0 - 150	1	0 - 90

The focus of most runaway and homeless youth centers is to reunite the youth with the family or at least to work with the youth and the family to reconcile the problems they have, even if the youth does not go back to the home from which he/she ran. Runaway and homeless youth centers are not considered to be a long-term housing option for youth.

E. Program Services

With the multitude of problems that runaway and homeless youth face, centers have to offer a variety of services to help youth deal with their problems and return to a stable home situation. The services include counseling, educational programs, medical screening or health care, recreation, transportation, advocacy and legal assistance. Table 3.6 indicates the specific program services that many centers either offer on-site or by referral while the youth are receiving shelter and the proportion of youth using each

service. As is indicated, the services most often available on-site include group counseling, family counseling, recreation, transportation and advocacy. Services most often offered by referral include medical care, psychological evaluation, mental health treatment, substance abuse counseling and legal assistance. The fact that these are the services offered by at least three-fourths of the shelters indicates the general emphasis of the shelters to provide immediate rather than long-term help for the youth. This is in keeping with the legislative intent of providing crisis intervention, generally thought of as short-term intervention. Most of the youth (95%) took advantage of individual counseling when it was available. Despite the emphasis that many shelters have on family reunification, only 61 percent of the youth participated in these services. This relatively low proportion might reflect the homeless youth or repeated runaways who feel there is no option to return home.

Since the youth's stay at the shelter is generally brief, there is no expectation that the services offered during that time will provide a resolution for all the youth's problems. To help runaways and homeless youth deal with their on-going problems, runaway and homeless youth centers offer after-care services on-site or through referrals. The services most often offerred on-site are individual and family counseling. However, a smaller proportion of the youth take advantage of these services as part of an aftercare program in comparison to those youth participating while staying in the RHYC. Only 54 percent of the youth received individual counseling and 44 percent received family counseling in an aftercare program. Table 3.7 above presents the service availability and participation rates in aftercare programs run by the runaway and homeless youth centers.

F. Barriers to Participation

As the number of runaways and homeless youth increase there is a corresponding increase in concern over continuing to meet the needs of these youth. During site visits to several runaway and homeless youth centers, community leaders and organizations expressed overwhelming support for the work the centers were doing, but concern over the need for an increase in these and other services. One issue raised by many is a general lack of prevention services in the community. By prevention services people were referring to prevention of issues that cause teenagers to leave home such as teenage pregnancy, mental health problems, physical or sexual abuse, and substance abuse. In addition there is the need for parental support or community services that would work with parents on parenting skills and family issues in an attempt to keep families intact. There is a general concensus that in most communties there is a growth in multi-problem families and an increase in the stresses faced by all families (increased costs of housing, health care, food, clothing, etc.). Unfortunately, there is not an increase in services, especially integrated services, to help families cope with their problems.

The service provider survey asked providers to describe the seriousness of potential barriers in their communities. Table 3.8 presents their responses. It is obvious that no one issue is a major problem in most communities. However, over 50 percent of sites felt that the following were at least a moderate problem: youth and community lack sufficient knowledge about their programs, distance and transportation to sites make it difficult for youth to access the program services and limited funding results in programs not being as good as they could possibly be. The majority of programs stated that their program had not been given bad media coverage.

Table 3.6

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS
PROGRAM SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND CLIENT PARTICIPATION
(proportions)

	Proportion of Sites Providing Service	Proportion of Sites Providing Referral	Runaway/ Homeless Youth Receiving This Service in Past Year
Individual counseling	68	38	95
Group counseling	83	33	72
Family counseling	92	38	61
Peer counseling	33	17	22
GED Preparation	25	56	13
Other tutoring	55	39	38
Life skills training	71	30	53
Employment counseling	44	59	21
Family planning	33	68	28
First aid	45	39	22
Health screening	36	63	56
Other medical care	16	83	27
Dental care	5	63	11
Psychological evaluation	19	78	25
Mental health treatment	23	77	27
Substance abuse counseling	55	74	36
Recreation	90	24	86
Transportation	88	28	76
Advocacy	84	30	67
Legal Assistance	8	79	17

Table 3.7

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS
PROGRAM SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND CLIENT PARTICIPATION
(proportions)

	Proportion of Sites Providing Service	Proportion of Sites Providing Referral	Runaway/ Homeless Youth Receiving This Service in Past Year
Individual counseling	82	56	54
Group counseling	44	50	23
Family counseling	77	57	44
Peer counseling	16	24	9
GED Preparation	12	63	10
Other tutoring	15	46	8
Life skills training	32	46	21
Employment counseling	27	64	15
Family planning	16	69	15
First aid	7	35	4
Health screening	7	57	13
Other medical care	5	60	10
Dental care	2	45	5
Psychological evaluation	14	67	12
Mental health treatment	16	73	19
Substance abuse counseling	34	76	23
Recreation	25	37	16
Transportation	31	31	19
Advocacy	62	40	37
Legal Assistance	6	63	8

Table 3.8

PRESENCE OF BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AS REPORTED BY RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS
(proportions)

	Major Problem	Moderate Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem
A. Youth do not know about available services	10	46	37	5
B. Distance and transportation make it difficult for youth to get to available services	21	34	30	14
C. The schools do not know about available services/do not refer youth	6	27	41	25
D. Other community agencies do not know about available services/do not refer youth	2	19	49	28
E. The community (parents, other residents) do not know about available services	8	44	39	6
F. The program has been given bad coverage in the media	2	2	10	85
G. Limited funding results in the program not being as good as it could be	31	32	24	10
H. There has been a high staff turnover	10	24	31	33
I. Program receives more referrals than it can handle	18	24	36	19

V. YOUTH FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with 127 former runaway youth to determine how and to what extent their life has changed since their stay at a Runaway and Homeless Youth Center (RHYC).[1] For 37 percent of the youth, the interview was conducted four to eight months after their stay at the RHYC shelter, and for 63 percent the interview was conducted 12 to 24 months later.

Considering the multiplicity of factors associated with adolescent running away, the researchers decided to ask the youth about their lives with respect to 12 different areas of adolescent functioning and well-being: housing, education, employment, financial security, physical health, sexual behavior, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice involvement, family situation, physical and sexual abuse, and pregnancy and parenthood. These areas were selected because they correspond to factors associated with adolescent running away, and these are areas in which both change and overall well-being can be measured. Three types of measures were applied to each of the 12 areas: a) indicators of improvement for youth who experienced a problem in this area prior to the RHYC stay; b) the youth's perception of change in this area; and c) indicators of well-being for all youth, regardless of whether or not they previously experienced a problem in a given area.

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1 The study was not designed to examine the underlying causes of running away. The fact that in the process of examining changes in the youth's lives we collected data on many of the factors believed to be associated, either causally or through correlation, with adolescent running away is of secondary concern for this report.

In some areas, the positive direction of the change is clear. For example, for a former drop-out to return to school is clearly a positive change. Likewise, in the area of substance abuse, any decrease in alcohol or drug use is positive. In other areas, the direction of the change is less obvious. As findings indicate, reunification with parents is desirable for some youth but not for all.

The youth were asked four types of questions:

1. For each of the 12 domains, they were asked about their situation a) immediately prior to the stay at the RHYC, and b) at the time of the interview. For selected domains, the youth were also asked about their situation immediately after leaving the RHYC. Responses to these questions allow measurement of the direction and extent of the change, but not necessarily its value.
2. For each area, they were asked their perception of the direction of the change: is the change for the better or for the worse?
3. For selected areas, they were asked additional questions regarding their functioning and well-being at the time of the interview.
4. And finally, they were asked whether the RHYCs intervention has been helpful, and how they would improve services and other aspects of the RHYC.

The data show that, on the whole, the youth are doing much better at the time of the interview than at the time of the runaway episode, and that their lives have become more stable. However, there is a small group whose situation has worsened. Since the study was not designed with a control group (it would have been well beyond the scope of the project to find youth who have run away and not sought help at a RHYC), we have no way of knowing whether youth who run

away and do not seek help at a RHYC fare any better or worse than those who do. Nor did we have the resources to follow a control group of non-runaways to see what type of changes are reported over time by non-runaway youth for each of these areas of adolescent functioning and well-being.

Although there is strong indication that for most youth the RHYC was both timely and effective, the information presented in this chapter should be read with the understanding that there was no comparison group, that this was not an outcome evaluation, and moreover, that it was beyond the scope of the study to control for intervening events.

The chapter is divided into four sections:

1. Section A presents the demographic characteristics of the 127 interviewed youth, and lists their presenting problems as identified by staff at the RHYCs at the time that the youth sought services there.
2. Section B discusses the extent to which the youth show improvement over time in each of the 12 areas of adolescent functioning and well-being.
3. Section C reports the youth's satisfaction with the services received at the RHYC, and reports their suggestions for program changes.
5. Section D compares the data collected in this study to data collected by the Administration of Children Youth and Families from all RHYCs that receive federal funds.

A. Characteristics of the Sampled Youth

Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewed Youth

In all, 127 youth were interviewed: 46 (37%) stayed at a Runaway and Homeless Youth Center (RHYC) in the past four to eight months, and 80 (63%) stayed during the past 12 to 24 months. For one youth this information is not available.

The majority of the 127 youth are female (65%) and white (81%). Ten percent are Black, five percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are Asian, and 2 percent are Native American. Exhibit 5A.1 compares the race/ethnicity of our sample with the racial/ethnic distribution of U.S. youth between the ages of 10 and 17. Although approximately the same number of interviewed youth are white (81%) as in the overall U.S. population, fewer are Black (10% versus 15% nationwide) and a slightly higher proportion are from other minority groups (9% versus 5%.)

Ages, at the time that the youth went to the RHYC, ranged from 10 to 17. The mean age was 14.79 (sd 1.37). The mean age of the girls at that time was 14.88.

As discussed in more detail in the methodology section, these youth were sampled from RHYCs in 18 different communities from across the country[2]

- San Diego, California
- Dover, Delaware

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2 Two of the sampled grantees have RHYC's in two different locations. Thus in Florida, the Clearwater and St. Petersburg locations represent a single grantee. Likewise in New Hampshire, the Manchester and Concord locations represent a single grantee.

Race/ethnicity

Comparison with all U.S. youth

(Current population reports, 1988)

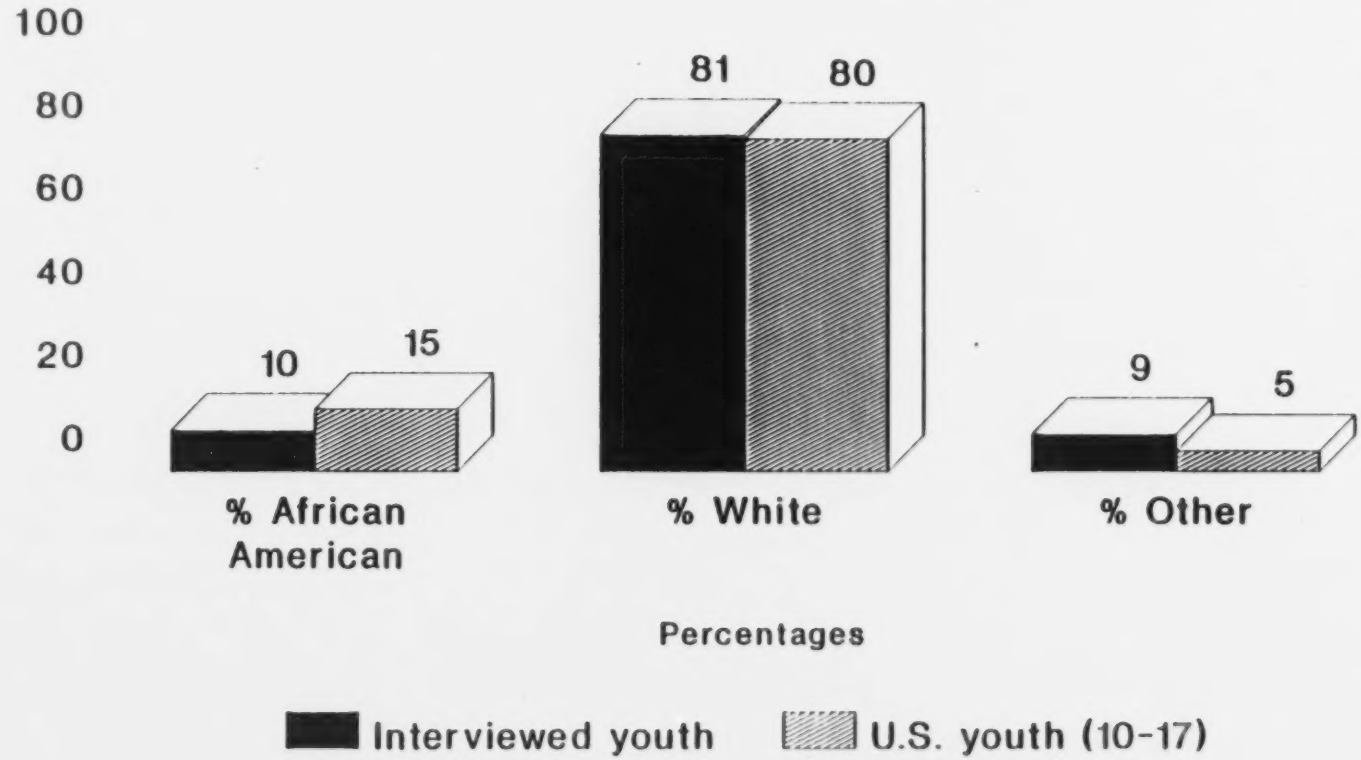

Exhibit 5A.1

- Clearwater, Florida
- St. Petersburg, Florida
- Salina, Kansas
- Bemidji, Minnesota
- Concord, New Hampshire
- Manchester, New Hampshire
- Trenton, New Jersey
- Cullowhee, North Carolina
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- El Reno, Oklahoma
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- Eugene, Oregon
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Austin, Texas
- Houston, Texas
- Cheyenne, Wyoming

On the average, five to six former RHYC clients from each of these cities were interviewed. Twenty seven percent of the youth lived in rural communities; 73 percent came from urban areas. Eleven percent of the youth came to the RHYC from communities over 50 miles away.

Presenting Problems Identified by Staff at RHYC Where Youth Sought Services

According to the records at the RHYCs where the youth received shelter and crisis counseling, family problems had been identified by staff at time of

intake as a presenting problem for 86 percent of the youth.[3] The other problems were: school-related problems (identified by staff for 21% of the youth); substance abuse problems,[4] physical or sexual abuse, and mental health (each 13%); housing (6%); juvenile justice and legal difficulties (2%), and pregnancy or parenthood (less than 1%).

Table 5A.1 shows the distribution of presenting problem by age. Note that the average age is higher for youth with housing and juvenile justice problems. The presenting problem information, in most cases is based on an intake worker's perception at the time that the youth went to the RHYC. Most youth report that at the time they went to the RHYC, they were experiencing major problems over and above those that were reported to us by the RHYC staff.

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3 For purposes of this study, the RHYCs were asked to report up to three presenting problems. The average number of presenting problems identified per youth was 1.3.

4 In this context substance abuse can refer either to substance abuse by the youth or by the parents or both.

Table 5A.1

PRESENTING PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY INTAKE STAFF AT RHYC: NUMBER AND MEAN AGE OF YOUTH (N=127)

Presenting problem	# of youth with problem	% of youth with problem	Mean age of of youth at time youth went to RHYC	Age range of these youth	Std dev.
Family situation	109	86	14.89	11 to 17	1.24
Education	26	20	14.81	12 to 17	1.17
Substance abuse	17	13	14.65	13 to 17	1.27
Physical/ sexual abuse	17	13	14.88	13 to 17	1.27
Mental health	16	13	14.38	10 to 17	1.67
Housing	8	6	15.00	14 to 17	1.07
Juvenile justice	3	2	16.00	15 to 17	1.00
Pregnancy	1	<1	16.00	not applicable	

B. Areas of Adolescent Functioning and Well-Being: Changes Since Stay at RHYC

This section presents the youth's responses to these questions for each of the 12 areas of functioning and well-being. Note that eight of these areas correspond to the list of possible presenting problems identified by the RHYCs for these youth. (See Table 5A.1 above) For these areas, additional information is provided on the youth with identified presenting problems.

1. Housing and Living Situation

Key questions in any study on youth that seek shelter at a RHYC are: a) where did the youth live before they came to the RHYC, and b) where do they go after leaving? The design of this study not only seeks answers to these two questions, but also asks where the youth are four to 24 months later.

These questions allows us to examine the extent to which the youth's living situation appears to have stabilized. As mentioned above, for each area of adolescent functioning and well-being we looked at indicators of change for youth who formerly had a problem, as well as at indicators of overall well-being.

Indicators of positive change in housing situation include: the number and percent of youth who say that their living situation has improved, and the number and percent of youth who formerly were experiencing housing problems (e.g. were homeless) who now no longer experience such problems.

This is one area where indicators of well-being are not clear cut. Clearly not being homeless is a positive indicator, but as the later sections on the youth's family situations indicate, return to the home of one or both parents isn't necessarily desirable.

Where did the youth live before going to the RHYC? The housing arrangements of the youth, prior to their stay at the RHYC, were as follows:

- **Youth lived with their parents — 101 youth (80%)**
  Of these, 43 youth (36% of 127) lived with their mother but not their father (this included reconstituted families in which the mother is remarried or is living with a boyfriend); 46 youth (34% of 127) lived with both parents; and 11 youth (9% of 127) lived with their father but not their mother (this included reconstituted families in which the father is remarried or is living with a girlfriend). One youth (<1%) lived with a parent but did not specify which one.

- **Youth lived with relatives, guardians or other adults - 11 youth (9%)**

  Of these, one youth lived with a step-parent and the step parent's spouse, four youth lived with grandparents, three youth lived with other relatives, and three youth lived with unrelated adults/guardians.

- **Youth lived in a foster home — one youth (<1%)**

- **Youth lived in a group home or other residential facility — six youth (5%)**

  Of these, two youth lived in group homes, three lived in a residential treatment center, and one has been staying in a shelter for runaway and homeless youth

- **Youth lived alone or with friends — five youth (4%)**

  Four of the youth lived with friends; one boy lived in a place by himself. It is not clear whether these youth were living without adult supervision.

- **Youth appear to have been homeless — three youth (2%)**

  Three youth appear to have been homeless: one youth had been staying in a hotel/motel; one lived on the street, and one had been living in a car.

Where did the youth go after leaving the RHYC? Table 5B1.1 shows where the youth have been living the three points in time: before going to the RHYC, after leaving the RHYC,[5] and at the time of the interview.

An examination of where the youth went immediately after leaving the RHYC and where they are at the time of the interview shows that only 44% of the youth returned to the same place where they had been living prior to the RHYC stay and have remained there. The remaining 56 percent have changed living situations at least once. These two situations are discussed below.

- **Youth have the same living situation prior to stay at RHYC, after leaving the RHYC and at time of interview.**

  At the time of the interview, 56 youth (44%) - 21 males and 35 females, have the same housing arrangement as before going to the RHYC and immediately after leaving the shelter. These 56 youth for the most part lived with their parents: 28 lived with both parents, three youth lived with their father, 22 youth lived with their mother. Two youth lived with grandparents or other relatives. One youth lived alone.

- **Youth have changed living situations at least once.**

  Seventy-one youth (56%) have changed living arrangements at least once. Some youth went to a new living arrangement when they left the RHYC and then moved again to yet another living arrangement; some went to a new living arrangement immediately after leaving the RHYC but then later returned to where they had been before the RHYC stay; some returned to where they had been living before going to the RHYC but did not remain there. Below are examples of three types of "moving patterns:"

- **Youth changed living arrangements at all three points in time.**

  Twenty-one youth (17% of the 127) at each point in time report a different living situation. See Exhibit 5B1.2 As

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5 Note that there was no distinction made in the sampling plan between youth who left the RHYC against staff recommendatins, and youth who went from the shelter to a staff-recommended housing situtation.

Table 5B1.1

HOUSING SITUATION
BEFORE GOING TO RHYC, AFTER LEAVING THE RHYC
AND AT TIME OF THE INTERVIEW

	Before		After		At time of interview	
Living situation	N	%	N	%	N	%
Parents	101	80	91	72	79	62
Both parents	43	34	39	31	33	26
Father only[2]	11	9	12	9	10	8
Mother only	46	36	40	31	36	28
One parent (not specified)	1	<1	0	-	0	-
Spouse	0	-	0	-	3	2
Other relatives/ guardians	11	9	13	12	17	13
Foster parents	1	<1	4	3	3	2
Group homes	2	2	1	1	3	2
Runaway shelter	1	<1	0	-	1	<1
Juvenile justice facility	0	-	2	2	0	-
Residential treatment center	3	2	3	2	1	<1
Boarding school	0	-	1	<1	3	2
Maternity home	0	-	1	<1	1	<1
College dormitory	0	-	0	-	1	<1
Job Corps	0	-	1	<1	1	<1
With friends	4	3	3	2	9	-
All under 18	0	-	2	2	0	-
At least one over 18	4	3	1	<1	9	7
Alone	1	<1	2	2	5	3
Hotel/motel	1	<1	0	-	0	-
On the street/in car	2	2	1	<1	0	-

2 As explained in the text, living with mother only means living with youth's biological or adoptive mother, but not with the youth's biological or adoptive

the exhibit indicates these youth are very mobile. It is not surprising that tracking these youth wasn't easy. This raises a question about the 195 youth whom we were unable to locate. Do they show similar moving patterns?

- **Youth have moved between homes of both parents.**

  Ten youth (8% of 127) have moved back and forth between the homes of separated or divorced parents. Five youth moved from their fathers' homes to that of their mothers, including one who has since returned to the father's home. Another five moved from their mother to their father's home, including two who have since returned back to the home of their mother.

- **Youth have not returned to the group homes or other residential facilities where they had been living prior to going to the RHYC.**

  Prior to going to the RHYC, six youth are in some form of residential facility. At the time of the interview, four of these youth have returned to live with either their mother (3 youth) or their father (one youth); one youth has since married and is living with her husband, and one youth is living with friends.

Overview of Where Youth are Living at the Time of the Interview.

At the time of the interview, the percentage of youth living in the home of one or both parents has decreased from 80 percent to 62 percent. See Table 5B1.1.

Other differences in living arrangements include:

- An increase in the number of youth living with other relatives or guardians (an increase from nine to 13%)
- An increase in the number of youth living in group homes, boarding schools or other residential facilities (from five to 9%)
- An increase in the number of youth living by themselves (from one to five youth).
- An increase in the number of youth living with fosterparents (from one to three youth).

Table 5B1.2

MOVING PATTERNS OF YOUTH WHO HAD DIFFERENT HOUSING AT THREE TIME POINTS: BEFORE GOING TO THE RHYC, IMMEDIATELY AFTER LEAVING AND AT TIME OF INTERVIEW (N=21)

FROM: Housing prior stay in RHYC	TO: Housing right after leaving RHYC	TO: Housing at of interview
Both parents (n=6)[3]	With friends under 18	Group home
	Alone	Father
	Juvenile detention ctr	Mother
	Relatives	Friends
	Relatives	Other relatives
	Residential treatment	Foster home
Mother (n= 5)[4]	Residential treatment	Relatives
	Father	Maternity home
	Friends	Job Corps
	Job Corps	Father
Grandparents (n=2)	Friends	Other friends
	Other grandparent(s)	Mother
Friends (n=2)	Fosterhome	Group home
	Relatives	Mother
Group home (n=1)	Both parents	Spouse and child
Runaway shelter (n=1)	Job Corps	Friends
Homeless (n=2)	Mother	Living alone
	Both parents	Spouse
Residential treatment (n=3)	Foster home	Mother
	Street	Mother
	Group home	Mother

3 In addition one youth went from home of both parents to a maternity home and then returned to the home of both parents.

4 In addition one youth lived with mother prior to stay at the RHYC, went from there to a psychiatric hospital, and then returned to her mother. Another youth lived with mother prior to stay at the RHYC, went from their to father's home, and at the time of the interview was again living with mother.

Because of the concern about the number of RHYC clients who appear to be former foster care children, the youth were asked about the number of fosterhome placements. Eight youth were in foster homes and group homes, either immediately prior to the stay at the RHYC, immediately afterwards or at the time of the interview. Six of these youth had earlier placements with fosterparents or in group homes. An additional 24 youth had been in foster homes or group homes at earlier periods in their life. This means that in all, 32 youth (25 percent of the 127) have, at one time or another, been in foster care.

Distance between the youth's home and the RHYC. Three fourths of the youth (79 youth, 74%) went to a local RHYC. Of the 48 youth who came to the RHYC from a different community, 14 youth (11% of 127) came from communities over 50 miles away. Twelve of these youth were from out of state. Two in-state youth came from communities that are 74 and 246 miles from the RHYC. The average distance for all 14 youth who came from communities over 50 miles away (both in-state and out-of-state youth) was 551 miles. The range was from 68 miles to 1774 miles; the median distance was 563 miles. See Table 5B1.3.

At the time of the interview, only 14 youth are living in a different community than the one where the RHYC is located. Of these, only nine youth (7% of 127) are in communities over 50 miles from the RHYC: four youth are in the same state, five youth have moved to another state. The average distance from the RHYC is 327 miles; the range is 63 to 858 miles; and the median is 112 miles.

Youths' perceptions of improvement in their housing situation. Over half (54%) state that at the time of the interview their housing situation is "much better" than it had been. One fifth (22%) rate their situation as "somewhat

Table 5B1.3

DISTANCE BETWEEN RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH SHELTER BEFORE YOUTH WENT TO RHYC AND AT TIME OF INTERVIEW

	Less than 50 miles		More than 50 miles		Median distance
	N	%	N	%	
Distance between RHYC and last place of residence	113	89%	14	11%	563 miles
Distance between RHYC and residence at time of interview	118	93%	9	7%	112 miles

better." For 17 percent it is "about the same", and for seven percent it has worsened: "somewhat worse" for five percent, and "much worse" for 2 percent.

Youth for whom housing is identified as a presenting problem. Housing was identified by staff at the RHYC as a major presenting problem for eight youth (6%).

Six of the eight youth (75%) for whom housing was identified as a major presenting problem say that their housing situation has improved: it is rated as "much better" by four youth, and as "somewhat better" by two youth. One youth says it is now worse than before. Data are missing for one youth.

Summary

The indicators in Table 5B1.4 show that in terms of housing there has been improvement for most youth. None of the youth are homeless at the time of the interview, including the three youth who were homeless prior to the stay at the RHYC. Five of the six youth who, prior to the stay at the RHYC were in a residential program, are now living with parents or spouse, or, in the case of one youth, alone. It is, however, not clear whether this is necessarily better. Six of the eight youth for whom housing was identified as a "major" problem rate their housing situation as being "somewhat better" or "much better" at the time of the interview.

In general, there are indications that the majority of the youth are in stable living environments.

2. Family Situation

The most basic of all questions about youth who seek shelter at a RHYC, or for that matter about any youth who are not living with their parents, is: "What family problems resulted in the youth not living with his or her

Table 5B1.4

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
HOUSING
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who were formerly homeless who are no longer homeless.	100%	2 out of 2
Number and percent of youth who were formerly in a group home or other facility who are now living with parents, grandparents, relatives or fosterparents.[5]	83%	5 out of 6
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Number and percent of youth who rate their housing as "much better" or "somewhat better" than at the time they went to the RHYC.	76%	96 out of 127
Indicators of well-being		
Youth who returned from RHYC to same place where youth lived prior to stay at RHYC, and have remained there.	44%	56 out of 127

5 Although it is not clear that is necessarily the best outcome for all youth, it is included here since family reunification is one of the goals of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Section D of this chapter further examines the characteristics of these youth.

parents?" For purposes of this study it was necessary to 1) identify underlying family problems, and 2) to determine whether these problems decreased over time. The youth were therefore queried about two types of family problems that could result in running away or being pushed out[6] of the home: a)conflict between the youth and the parents, and b) events causing stress to the family and perhaps undermining the existing family equilibrium.

Three types of family stressors were examined: a) events such as recent divorce or remarriage, prolonged illness, parental substance abuse, or unemployment, b) housing-related problems including eviction and having to double up with families; and c) legal problems such as custody and child support problems.

This information allowed for the measurement of the following change indicators: a) decrease in household stressors, b) reduction in conflict between youth and parents, and c) reduction in conflict between youth and other household members. Indicators of well-being include: a) living in a household with little or no conflict, and b) living in a household that is experiencing few or no stressors.

To help interpret these data, the youth were asked to identify whom they considered to be their "mother" and "father" figures.

Identified parent figures. Although the overwhelming majority (86%) say that they consider their biological or adoptive mother to be their mother, only 55 percent consider their biological or adoptive father to be their father. In fact, 17 percent report that there is no one whom they consider as their

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6 Unless otherwise specified, the report uses the generic term "runaway" to refer both to youth who have run from home as well as to those who have been told to leave home.

father. Other parent figures include stepparents and grandparents. See Exhibit 5B2.1.

Family stressors. As mentioned above, three types of stressors were examined: housing-related problems, legal problems, and other family stressors.

a. **Family stress.** The families with whom the youth were living in the year prior to the RHYC stay were subject to a variety of stressors. These stressors, experienced by the youth's parents, siblings and other household members, are listed in Exhibit 5B2.2. They include: divorce, remarriage, job loss, death, and hospitalization. By adding up and averaging the number of such stressors per family, we developed a mean stress score covering these events. Prior to the youths' stay at the RHYC, the means family stress score was 1.05 (sd 1.38). At the time of the interview the mean stress score is 0.46 (sd. 0.87). The difference between the two scores is -.59 (sd. 1.44). This difference shows the significant decrease in stressful family events between the time when the youth went to the RHYC and the time of the interview ($T=-460$, $p> 0.0001$).

b. **Housing problems experienced by parents and other household members.** A recent concern in the field is the relationship between parental homelessness and housing difficulties, and adolescent running away and homelessness. There is some anecdotal evidence that family homelessness at times results in adolescent children having to survive on their own. We therefore also examined housing-related problems experienced by the youth's parents and other household members. In the year before the youth went to the RHYC, the parents and other household members of 13 youth (10%) experienced the following housing-related problems: eviction (experienced by the parents of 2 youth); homelessness

Parent figures identified by youth at time of interview

N=127

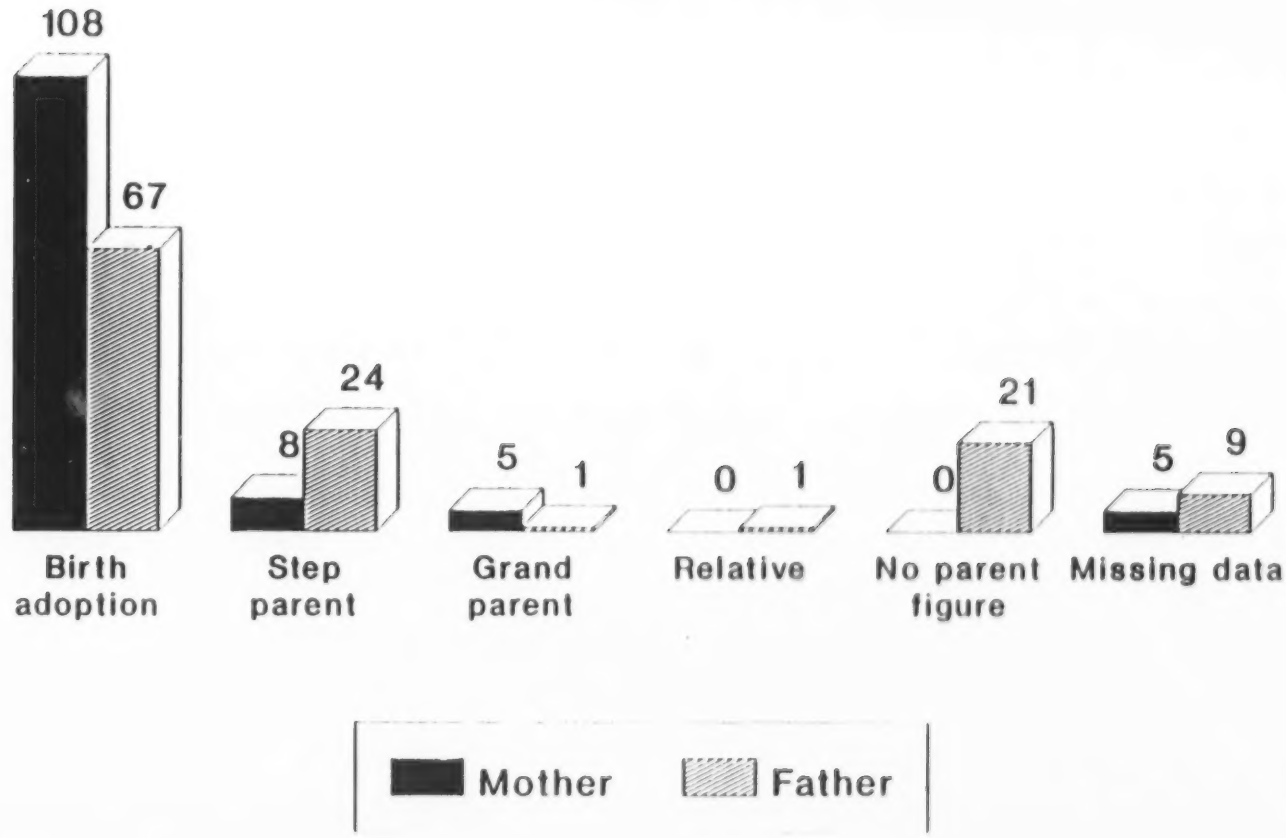

Exhibit 5B2.1

Stressors in family/household where youth has been staying

N=127

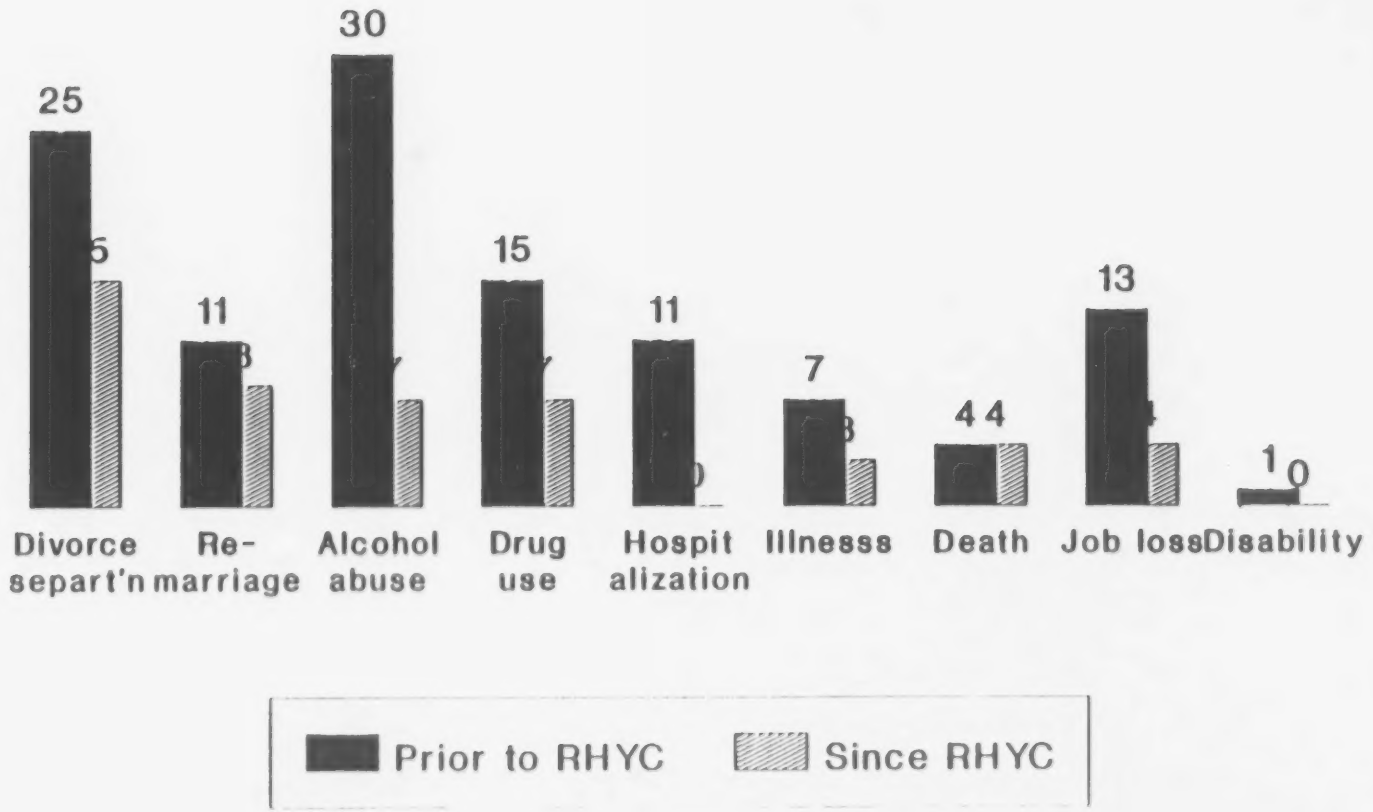

Exhibit 5B2.2

resulting in having to live on the street or in a car (parents of 2 youth); having to double up with friends or relatives (parents of five youth); the family having to split up and live different places (the parents of 10 youth), and staying in a shelter for the homeless (the parents of one youth). See Exhibit 5B2.3. In the time since leaving the RHYC, such problems have been experienced by only six of these 13 households. However, at the time of the interview, eight new households were experiencing housing problems.

As the figure in Exhibit 5B2.4 shows, in all, the families of 21 youth (17%) have experienced housing-related problems either before or after the youth's stay at the RHYC. Almost the same number experienced such problems before the stay in the RHYC (13 families) as did afterwards (14 families). This latter number includes the six families who experienced housing problems both before and after the youth's stay in the RHYC.

c. Legal problems. The following legal difficulties were experienced by the families of 22 youth: child support issues (the families of seven youth), parental divorce (the families of two youth), youth not getting along with parent or guardian (2 youth), custody problems (the family of 12 youth). These problems are listed here as they too may be contributing factors to family stress and instability.

At the time of the interview, these issues seem to have been resolved for most of the families. Only five youth list continuing difficulties. Three youth say that the divorce presented an ongoing legal problem. One youth who formerly listed custody as a problem now say that there is a problem in not getting along with the appointed custodial parent or guardian. And one youth reports that child abuse has presented legal problems to him and his family both prior to and following the stay at the RHYC.

Housing problems
Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC (N=127)

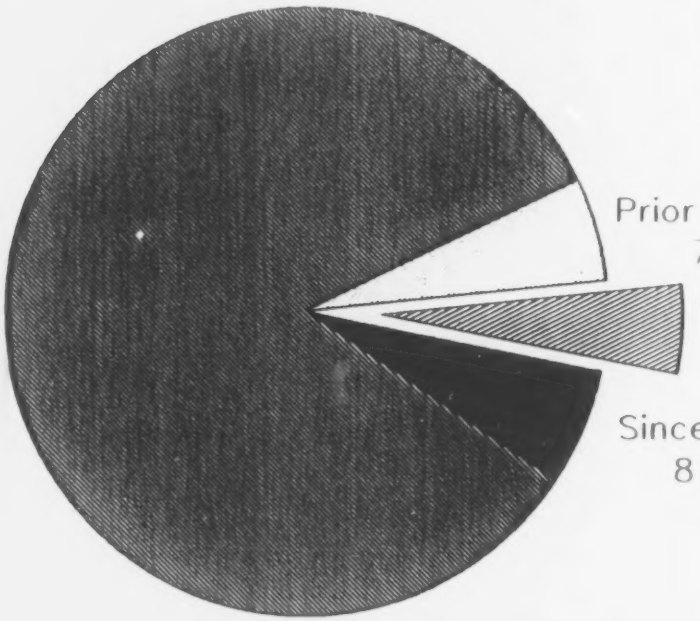

Exhibit 5B2.3

The separate slice represents 6 youth in families with housing problems prior to and after the RHYC stay

# Housing problems in families and household where youth have been staying
N=127

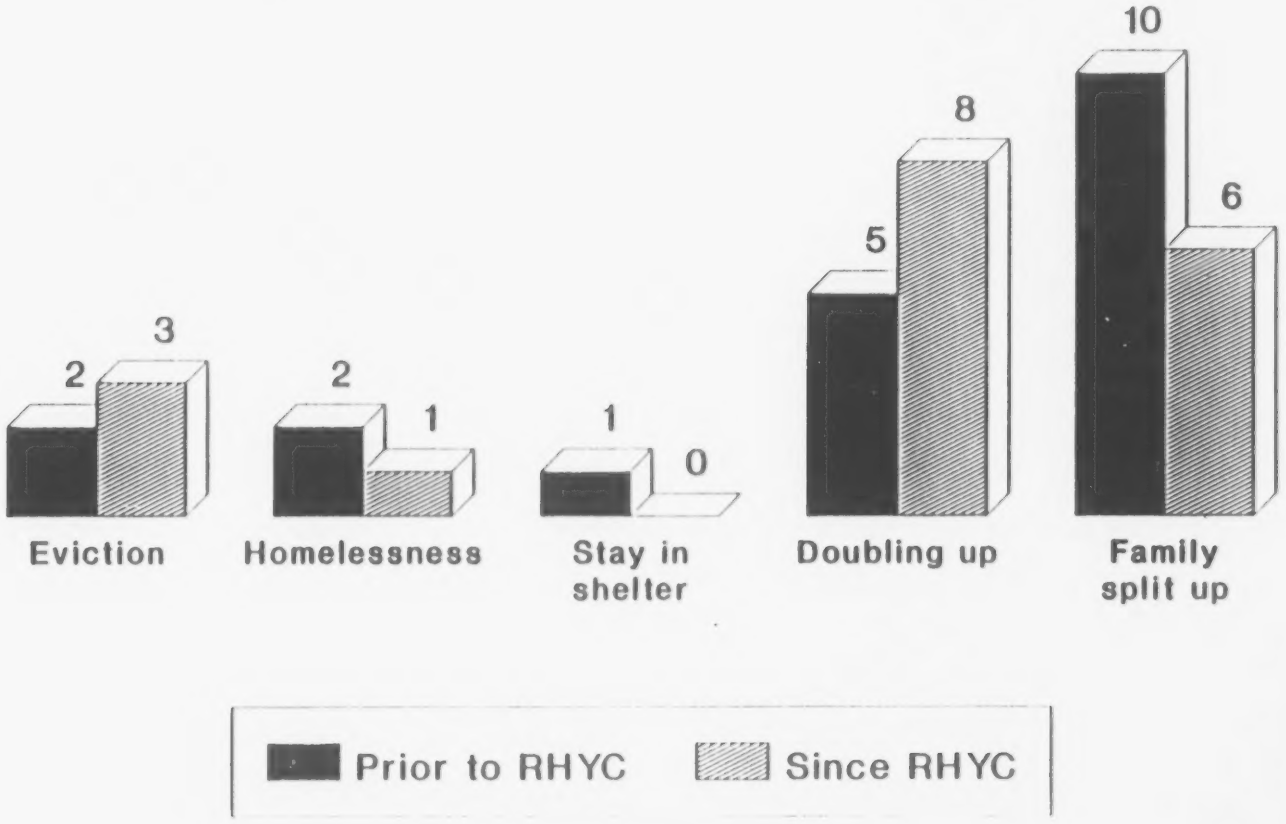

Exhibit 5B2.4

Only one youth who had reported no legal problems prior to the stay at the RHYC, reports a new legal problem, parental child abuse, has occurred in the time since leaving the RHYC.

Conflict with parents. A four point rating scale was used ("major", "moderate", "minor", or "no problem") to rate conflict between the youth and their parents. Prior to the time they went to the RHYC, conflict with parents was a "major" problem for 67 youth (53%). Sixteen youth (13%) rate it as having been a "moderate" problem; 20 percent as a "minor" problem; and 14 percent say that there had been no conflict between them and their parents.

At the time of the interview, 59 of the 83 youth for whom family conflict had been a "major" or "moderate" problem, say the problems are now either "minor" (21 youth) problems or no longer a problem at all (38 youth). Only four youth who had not reported family conflict as a problem prior to their stay at the RHYC, say that by the time of the interview, family conflict has become a "major" problem (2 youth) or a "moderate" problem (2 youth).

Overall, family conflict as a "major" or "moderate" problem has decreased from 68 percent to 21 percent for these youth.

Youth's perception of improvement in their family situation. All youth were asked to compare their current family or household situation at the time of the interview to the way it was at the time immediately prior to going to the RHYC. Nearly half (49%) state that at the time of the interview their family or household situation is "much better" than it had been. Over one-third (38%) rate it as "somewhat better." For 10 percent it is "about the same"; for only three percent has the situation worsened: it is "somewhat worse" for one youth and "much worse" for three youth.

Youth for whom family conflict and other family problems were a major presenting problem. Family problems were rated by staff at the RHYC as a major presenting problem for 109 youth (86%).

Eighty-seven percent of these youth noted improvement in their family situation (i. e "I'm back with my family--we're a lot closer and everything has been real good this past year"). A number of youth directly ascribe the improvement to the help that they received at the RHYC. The three most frequently cited reasons for improved parent-child relations are: a) improved communications; b) better conflict management--a reduction in "fighting" and "yelling," and c) better understanding on the part of the youth of the parents' problems. In most instances, the comments do not specify what problems are being faced by the parent, but a number of youth speak of parental alcohol abuse: "The staff at the [RHYC] made me more aware of alcoholism in my family. The counselor talked me into going to Alateen. Later, I joined Alcoholic Anonymous.... I'm still seeing a counselor and I don't live at home anymore."

Exhibit 5B2.5 lists some of the comments made by these youth regarding improvement in their relationship with their parents.

Sometimes the youth ascribe the change to counseling, but not always. For instance, one youth says: "We tried family counseling and my mother had an argument with the counselor, so we did not continue. My mother and I talk now, but we sort of have an agreement. We stay out of each other's lives." One youth feels that the RHYC wasn't instrumental in decreasing family conflict: "I get along better with my parents, but I don't think the [RHYC] helped me do it."

For some youth, the situation has remained the same (9%). For four percent, it has become worse: "somewhat worse" for one percent and "much

EXHIBIT 5B2.5

EXAMPLES OF REASONS GIVEN BY YOUTH FOR IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

Examples of improved communication

"Before counseling, my sister kept her feelings to herself - now she can express them to me and her family. My brother and I get along better. We don't fight as much. We respect each other's feelings more. Also, me and my dad worked out an agreement so I wouldn't be stuck with all the chores. He writes down a couple of chores he wants me to do, and I write down some things I want to do, like be out after 8:00 p. m. He has learned to be more accepting of my boyfriend and my choice of clothes which he previously criticized. He wouldn't let me grow up before. Now he understands me better."

"After I left the [RHYC], I didn't want to kill myself anymore. Things continue to be better. There are fewer fights at home. We talk things out."

"We learned to communicate. There had been a serious lack of communication. Now there is more openness between us. We aren't yelling or screaming. There is more love and caring."

"We talk more and get along better. They trust me more now."

"We are able to talk more. We have become closer."

"There's better communication. My parents now realize that I am a person, not a child."

"I'm getting along better with my family. I am more calm. I can express myself better. I learned to understand myself better. There are still things I don't like and they don't like. We are learning to understand each other better."

"No problems with my parents since the counseling at the [RHYC]. We don't fight and argue like we used to, we have a normal relationship."

"I get along better with my parents, and I follow rules better. I have matured a lot. Individual counseling taught me not to yell at my parents and to consider their feelings. I learned how to talk with my parents without yelling. I think they understand me better now."

Exhibit 5B2.5 page 2 of 3

Examples of better conflict management

"Things are 90 percent better. The fights are less severe. We compromise on situations now. My mother is in the middle, and my stepfather and me are on both ends. As a result of counseling, we compromise instead of fist-fight. I'm still going to counseling."

"I went back home. I don't have as many fights with my mom as I used to."

"There's no longer a lot of bad tempers. There's not as much arguing. That's about it."

"I get along better with my parents. They didn't like my boyfriend before the [RHYC]. Soon after I left the [RHYC], I broke up with him. This smoothed things out a lot between my parents and myself."

"I am living with my grandparents now. I don't live with my parents anymore and I get along with them better. We can talk now. Before we couldn't be in the same room together without fighting. Now we get along the way it should have been in the first place."

Examples of youths' better understanding of parent

"I learned to respect my mother a little more. Before counseling [at the RHYC], I used to hate her. Now I understand her. We have become friends. I now live with her and work with her."

"I grew to love my family, and appreciate them more. My friends and people outside my family come and go, but my family will always be there for me. I used to have suicide on my mind, but with counseling I learned that everyone has problems. I now understand why my mother doesn't let me do things, it's because of her love and concern."

"I changed my attitude. I learned to consider the other person's side of the problem. My parents and I are more tolerant of each other."

"I have worked hard on trying to get rid of my anger toward my mother. I'm learning to deal with my anger, and understand my mother's problem."

"My mother was going to counseling. She would only talk about my problems, not hers. She has had a lot of problems from her childhood. I'm not supposed to know about them, but I do. We now don't argue as much as we used to."

"[The counseling at the RHYC] helped me understand my mom better, but it also made me more angry."

"Staying at the [RHYC] made me take my time to get to know my mother better. I appreciate my mother and understand her problems better."

"My attitude changed a lot after I went to the [RHYC]. I learned to look at my mother's point of view about my behavior. Because of parent counseling, my mother started to understand me better and how I feel. "

Examples of improvement resulting from a changed living situation

"My grandmother and I get along much better now that I'm not living with her."

"My relationship with my mom is worse, but I am not living with my mother anymore. I'm living with my grandmother and things are better. I get along better with my grandmother. She treats me better than Mom."

"I was moved from my mother's custody to my father's custody. It was for the better. I'm much closer to my father. We get along better."

"The staff at the [RHYC] helped me understand the problems of my parents regarding drugs and alcohol. Now that I live with my grandparents, I have a more stable home life. "

"Things are better now because I am living with my fostermother. My father won't talk to me. He still criticizes me."

"We're able to communicate better. Also, I don't live with my stepmom anymore."

"After I left the [RHYC], we got along better for awhile. My dad and I understood each other better, but we still couldn't get along. So now I'm living with my mom."

"Things are better now because I'm not living with them. I would like to live with my dad, but I don't get along with my stepmother."

"Because we don't see each other so frequently, things are better."

worse" for three percent. One youth states: "We get along worse than we did before counseling."

For one youth, the situation was worse for a while after leaving the RHYC, but has since improved: "My attitude got worse after I left the [RHYC]. But now I've grown up. I want my life to be improved. It has nothing to do with the [RHYC]. I want my life to be better. The [RHYC] wasn't good. I left there because it was an old house falling down. They gave me too much freedom for the situation. It was fun to be there. The people there wanted to get paid, but they didn't help us. It was the same old thing."

Several youth say that counseling was not very helpful: "We talked about my problem. Group counseling wasn't very helpful. The [other youth] didn't want to talk." And yet another honestly ascribes the lack of change to own lack of motivation: "Things haven't changed and I know why. It's because I haven't put forth any effort."

Summary. Although family problems were the most frequently identified presenting problem, it also is one of the areas that showed the greatest amount of improvement. There has been a definite decline in conflict between the youth and both parents as well as other household members. The majority of the youth (78%) feel that their situation is now "much better" or "somewhat better." See Table 5B2.1.

There also appears to have been an overall decrease in most, but not all, areas of family stress. Six of the 13 families who were experiencing housing problems prior to the youth's stay at the RHYC have not experienced such problems in the months since the youth left the RHYC. On the other hand, eight families who had not previously experienced housing-related problems are having such problems at the time of the interview. In terms of parental legal

Table 5B2.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
FAMILY SITUATION
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who rated conflict with parents as a "major" or "moderate" problem when they went to the RHYC who now rate such conflict as a "minor" problem or no problem at all.	71%	59 out of 83
Youth whose parents and other household members were experiencing housing. problems who no longer are experiencing these problems.	54%	7 out of 13
Youth whose parents were experiencing legal problems who no longer are experiencing legal problems.	76%	16 out of 21
Youth perception of change		
Youth who rate their family situation as "much better" or "somewhat better" than it was at the time when they went to the RHYC.[6]	87%	105 out of 112
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth whose parents and other household members are not experiencing housing problems	89%	113 out of 127
Youth whose parents are not experiencing legal problems	95%	121 out of 127
Youth who rate conflict with parents as a "minor" or "moderate" problem.	78%	99 out of 127

[6]Data are missing for 15 youth.

problems, there has been significant improvement. Prior to the youth's stay at the RHYC, legal problems, mostly pertaining to child custody and child support issues, were reported for 22 families. At the time of the interview, these difficulties have been resolved in all but five families. No new parental legal problems are reported.

3. Physical or Sexual Abuse

Closely related to family conflict is child abuse, including sexual abuse. The literature indicates that both are significant precursors of either an adolescent running away or being thrown out of the home. This section covers abuse by family members as well as by outsiders.

Indicators of positive change consist of any decline in physical or sexual abuse by youth who formerly reported such abuse. Indicators of well-being consist of the number and percent of youth who have experienced no such abuse in the months since leaving the RHYC (regardless of whether or not there was a report of prior abuse).

Physical abuse. One-third of the youth (24 youth, 35%) report prior physical abuse in response to the question: "Before you went to the [RHYC] in [MONTH] [YEAR] had you **ever** been beaten or treated so badly that you were injured (bruised, cut, burned)"? Seventeen of the 24 youth (13% of 127) report being hurt by a family member; seven report being hurt by someone outside the family. (Two youth report they were hurt by both a family member and a person outside the family).

In the months following the stay at the RHYC, seven of the 24 report having been abused. Six have been hurt by a family member, including one youth for whom the earlier injury had been inflicted by a non-family member.

However, an additional eight youth who had not formerly been abused, report abuse following the stay at the RHYC. See Exhibit 5B3.1 In each case, the abuse was by a family member.

In all, therefore, while 24 youth report having been abused sometime prior to the RHYC stay, 15 report abuse in the months thereafter. However, the decline is mostly in abuse by non-family members. Prior to the RHYC stay, 17 youth report abuse by a family member, and subsequent to the RHYC stay, 14 youth report such abuse. Exhibit 5B3.1 show the number of youth reporting abuse by family members and by non-family members at the three points in time: before and after the RHYC stay, and at the time of the interview. Exhibit 5B3.2 shows abuse by family member at these three points in time.

Sexual abuse. Over one fourth of the youth (36 youth, 28%) report sexual abuse in response to the question: "Before you went to the [RHYC] in [MONTH] [YEAR] did someone ever do anything sexual to you against your will?" Three of the 36 youth (2 males and one female) report abuse by someone of the same sex.

Only four of the 36 report sexual abuse for the time frame after they left the RHYC. However, another eight youth who had not reported prior sexual abuse, report that they have been abused in the months since leaving the RHYC. Two are youth who report that physical abuse began in the time since leaving the RHYC.

In all, there has been a decline from 36 youth (28%) to 12 youth (9%) in the number and percent of youth reporting some form of sexual abuse. See Exhibit 5B3.3.

One question was asked about sexual abuse by a family member. Eight youth (6% of 127) say that they have participated in sexual behavior with a family

Abuse by family member or outsider Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC (N=127)

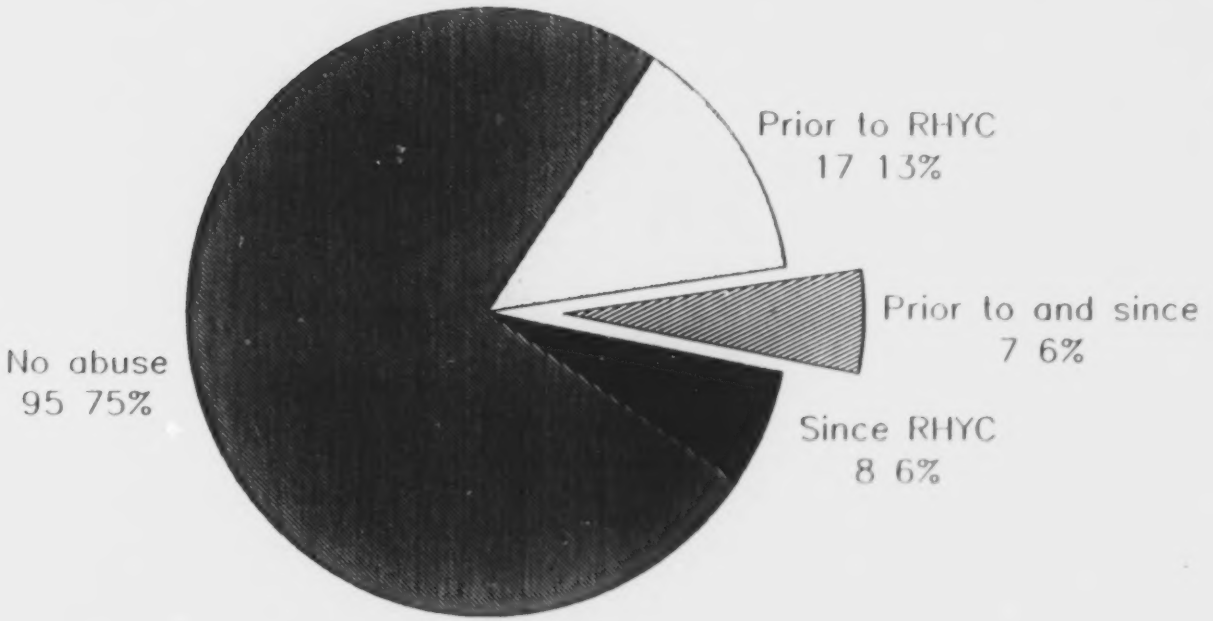

Exhibit 5B3.2

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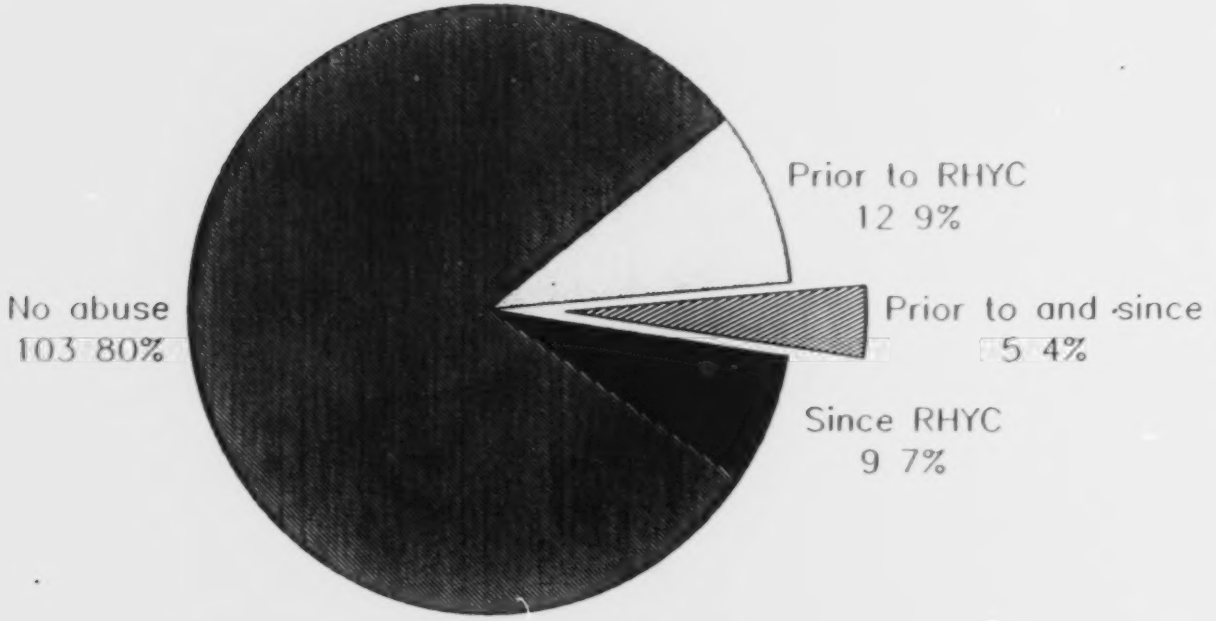
The separate slice represents 7 youth who were abused by family member or outsider both before and after the RHYC

Abuse by family member
Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC (N=127)



The separate slice represents 5 youth who were abused by a family member both before and after the RHYC

Sexual abuse
Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC (N=127)

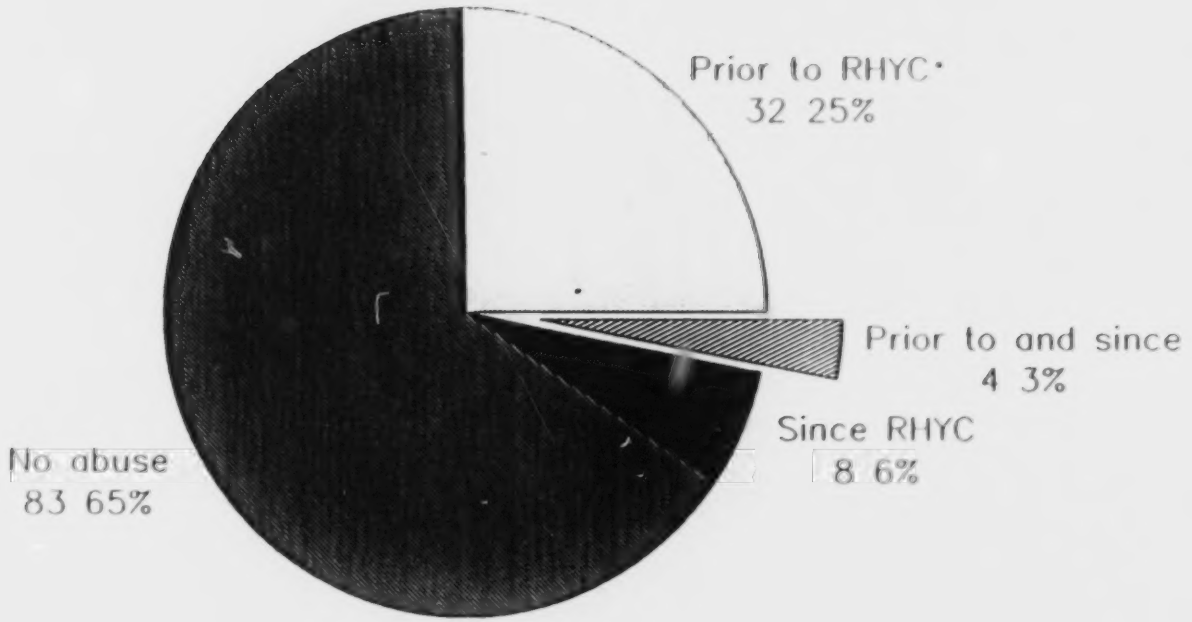


Exhibit 5B3.3

The separate slice represents 4 youth who report sexual abuse both prior to and since leaving the RHYC

member. For five youth this occurred some time prior to the stay at the RHYC, but not since then. For one youth it occurred following the stay at the RHYC, but not prior to that time. For two youth it is not clear whether it happened both before or after the RHYC stay.

Self-reported decrease in extent of physical and sexual abuse. Staff identified physical or sexual abuse as a major presenting problem for 15 youth (13%).

Here are comments made by three youth regarding discontinuation of the physical abuse:

"After I left the [RHYC], I never got hit again."

"It [the physical abuse] stopped because I stood up for myself."

"It [the physical abuse] stopped because I became more open. I am able to talk more openly. At the [RHYC], I learned the skills to communicate better. I learned how to deal with my anger in a more positive way. I learned not to keep everything inside. I learned how to deal with the anger I have toward my grandfather."

Others say that they have learned to handle the emotional scars left by sexual abuse.

"I knew [the sexual abuse] wasn't my fault. I had the guts to press charges. The [counseling] took the tension off me. It got my feelings out."

"I didn't blame myself for [the sexual abuse]. I learned to put it aside, not dwell on it. The [counseling] helped me talk about the sexual and physical abuse. It was really more emotional than physical abuse."

One 16 year old girl, speaking about sexual abuse that took place when she was a young child says: "I understand it more. I was young, I was only six.

It's not blocked up in the back of my mind anymore, and I don't wonder anymore."

For one young boy who was 15 at the time that he went to the RHYC, the abuse continues. He describes his situation as having become "much worse," explaining: "I went to the RHYC because I hoped to get foster parents."

Summary. Table 5B3.1 shows indicators of change related to physical and sexual abuse. For the majority of the youth who had experienced physical or sexual abuse sometime prior to their stay at the RHYC, their situation has improved. There are also indications that for some of the youth, the counseling helped them deal with the past events.

However, for seven of the youth who report prior abuse, the abuse continues, as it does for four of the youth who report prior sexual abuse. Moreover, eight youth who report no prior physical abuse, say that they have been physically hurt by family members in the time since they left the RHYC, and eight youth who report no prior sexual abuse have experienced such abuse in the time since they left the RHYC.

4. Financial Security

Much of the literature on runaway and homeless youth discusses the illegal survival techniques sometimes used by homeless youth who have no other means of financial support during periods away from home. As discussed below, for the majority of these runaways, their sources of financial support appear to not be different from what one would expect for the population at large.

For this area, positive change measures include: a) no longer relying on illegal or inappropriate methods of support such as panhandling, hustling, and

Table 5B3.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who report past physical abuse who are no longer abused.	71%	17 out of 24
Youth who reported past sexual abuse who report no sexual abuse since leaving the RHYC.	89%	32 out of 36
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who report no sexual abuse since leaving the RHYC.	95%	121 out of 127
Number and percent of youth who report no physical abuse since leaving the RHYC.	88%	112 out of 127

borrowing from friends; and b) now having money for necessities, when formerly this was a problem.

Indicators of well-being for all youth include having money for necessities, and having a regular, appropriate and legal means of financial support.

Source of financial support. The youth were asked to indicate what their sources of financial support were in the month prior to the stay at the RHYC, immediately after the stay at the RHYC, and in the month preceding the interview. At all three points in time, the majority have been supported by their parents, guardians or other family members, including grandparents. However, the proportion supported by parents decreased over time: 94 percent prior to running away; 87 percent immediately after running away; and 79 percent at the time of the interview. At that time, a greater proportion of the youth are supported by their own employment, by their spouses, or, in the case of one youth, by college financial aid.

Source of financial support, other than support from parents or guardians, included:

- **The youth's own (legal) employment:** 20 percent of the youth considered this a source of support prior to their stay at the RHYC , 13% immediately afterwards, and 21 percent at the time of the interview.
- **Social security benefits:** 2 percent prior to going to the RHYC, immediately after leaving the RHYC, and at the time of the interview.
- **Some form of public aid including welfare/AFDC benefits, WIC food vouchers, food stamps, and child welfare**[7] : two percent at time of interview, six percent after leaving the RHYB, and five percent at the time of the interview.

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7 In this category, are included youth who indicated that their fosterparents provided financial support.

- **Support from boy friend or girl friend:** five percent prior to going to the RHYC; three percent immediately after leaving; and five percent at the time of the interview.

- **Handouts or money from other friends:** four percent prior to going to the RHYC and immediately after leaving; and 2 percent at the time of the interview, including one youth who is supported by the parents of a friend.

- **Panhandling or money from strangers:** one youth reports this for the time prior to going to the RHYC; none immediately after leaving the RHYC and none at the time of the interview.

- **Hustling or drug dealing:** two youth (one male drug dealer and one female who said she was involved in drug dealing and what she herself called "prostitution) prior to going to the RHYC; and none thereafter.

- **Support from the youth's spouse:** at the time of the interview, three youth say they are now married and are supported by their spouse.

- **College financial assistance:** one young woman indicated that her main source of financial support, at the time of the interview, came in the form of college financial aid.

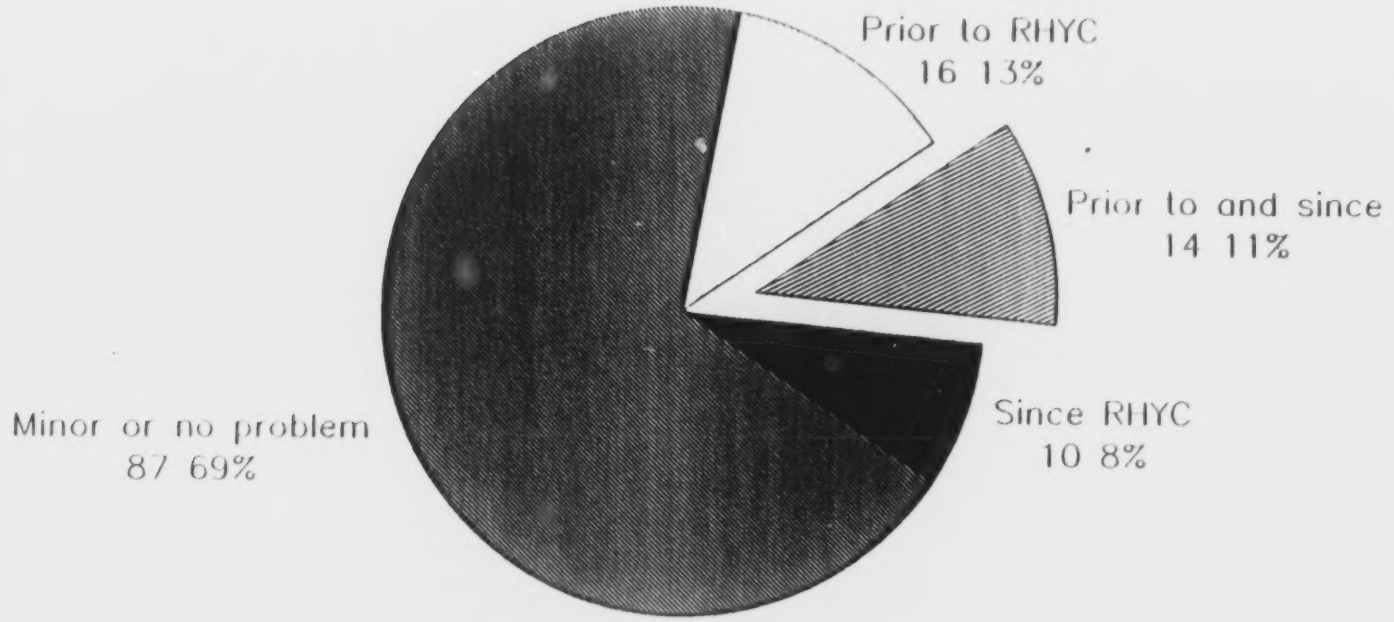
One youth reports having no source of financial support at the time of the interview.

Adequacy of financial support. Thirty youth (24%) indicate that, at the time they to the RHYC, having money for necessities was either a "major" or a "moderate" problem." This situation improved for 16 of the 30 youth. However at that time of the interview, having money for necessities has become a problem for 10 youth for whom this had not previously been a problem. See Exhibit 5B4.1.

Overall, the number and percent of youth for whom having money for necessities is a problem decreased slightly, from 30 youth (24%) to 24 youth (19%).

Youth's perceived improvement in financial security. Forty-two of the youth (33%) state that at the time of the interview their financial situation

Adequacy of financial support
Money for necessities is a major or moderate problem



Prior to, and in the time since stay at the RHYC

Exhibit 5B4.1

is "much better" than it had been. Twenty-five (20%) state that their situation is "somewhat better." For 49 youth (39%), it has remained ""about the same", and for nine percent it has worsened: "somewhat worse" for eight percent, and "much worse" for one percent.

Summary. There has been a slight decrease in the number and percent of youth for whom having money for necessities is a problem, from 24 percent to 19 percent. Overall, 53 percent feel that their financial situation is "much better" or "somewhat better." It has worsened for nine percent. See Table 5B4.1.

Two youth stated that they used to support themselves by hustling. The first, a 15 year old boy is supported by his grandparents at the time of the interview (he says that at the time he went to the RHYC, he was supported by his parents as well as through drug dealing). The second youth, a 13-year old girl, is back home with her mother.

5. Education

Based on existing research, the relationship between school failure and running away is not clear. It is quite likely that for many youth, both the school problems and the running away are responses to the same internal and external stressors that result in the youth being a runaway or a "push out." One youth explains this well: "Because my parents are back together now, I feel a lot better about the whole situation, so I'm able to concentrate on my school work a lot better now."

The youth were queried about school attendance on the assumption that a) education is an area that is related to running away behavior, and b) educational improvement is a positive indicator of adolescent well-being.

Table 5B4.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
FINANCIAL SECURITY
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who formerly rated having money for necessities as a "major" or "moderate" problem, and now rate it as a "minor" problem or "no problem."	53%	16 out of 30
Youth who formerly listed illegal sources of support who no longer use these sources.	100%	2 out of 2
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth supported by parents or other appropriate and legal sources.	94%	120 out of 127
Youth who rate having money for necessities as either a "minor" problem or "no problem."	82%	104 out of 127

Positive change indicators include: returning to school on a regular basis for youth who formerly had dropped out, or were in school but mostly skipping classes, or had been suspended or expelled. Indicators of well-being for all youth include: attending school on a regular basis, being in an age appropriate grade, being a high school graduate, obtaining a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or attending a post-secondary educational program.

School attendance. The youth were asked about school attendance in the month prior to their stay at the RHYC, immediately after leaving the RHYC, and in the month preceding the interview. In the weeks preceding the stay at the RHYC, 115 (91%) were enrolled in school, nine youth (7%) were drop-outs, and three youth (2%) had been suspended or expelled. The youth enrolled in school included 23 youth who say they were enrolled but mostly skipped classes.

Exhibit 5B5.1 shows the youth's school status at three points in time.

At the time of the interview, 18 (78%) of the 23 youth who say that formerly they mostly skipping classes are attending school on a regular basis. The three youth who had been suspended or expelled at the time that they went to the RHYC are back in school. Of the nine former drop-outs, six have returned to school.

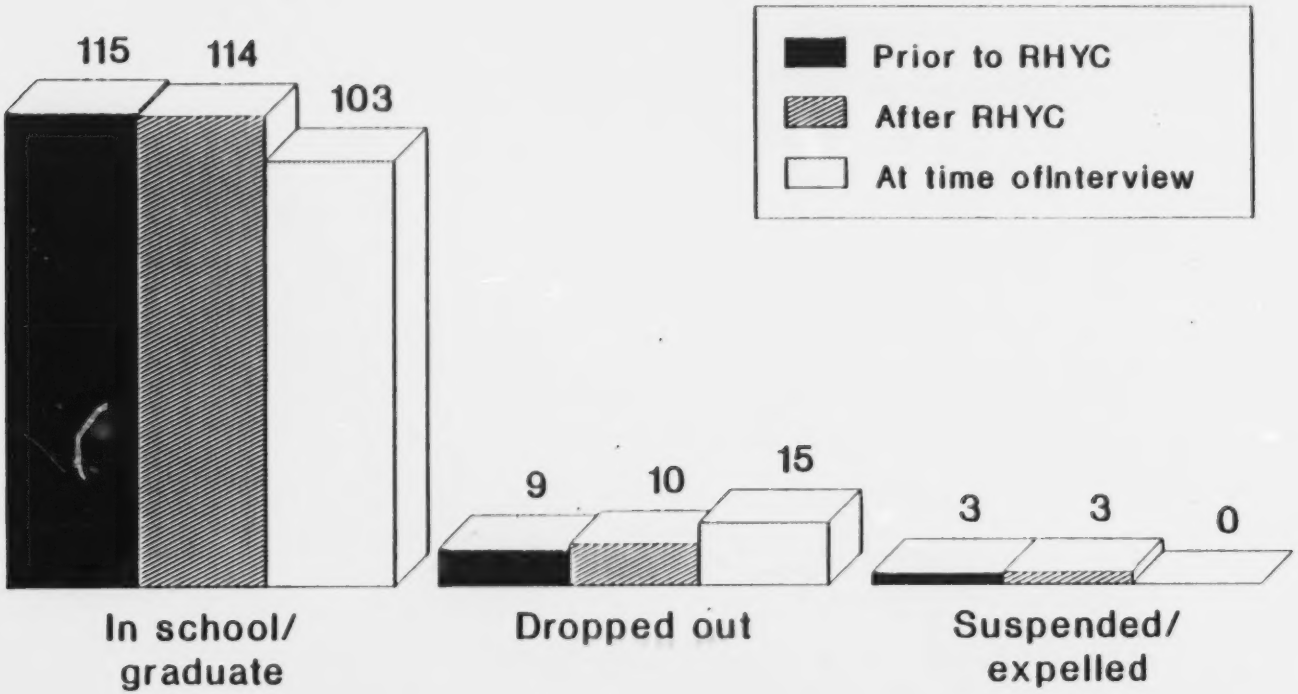
On the other hand, at the time of the interview, an additional 12 youth have dropped out of school. This means that at the time of the interview, the dropout number and rate has increased from nine youth (7%) to 15 youth (11 percent). See Exhibit 5B5.2.

The remaining 112 youth have either graduated or obtained a GED (9 youth, 7% of 127), or are in school (103 youth, 81% of 127).

Educational attainment. Prior to going to the RHYC, the last grade completed for over one-fourth of the youth (27%) was the 7th grade or less.

School status

Before and after going to the RHYC and at time of interview



N = 127

Exhibit 535.1

Drop-out status
Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC

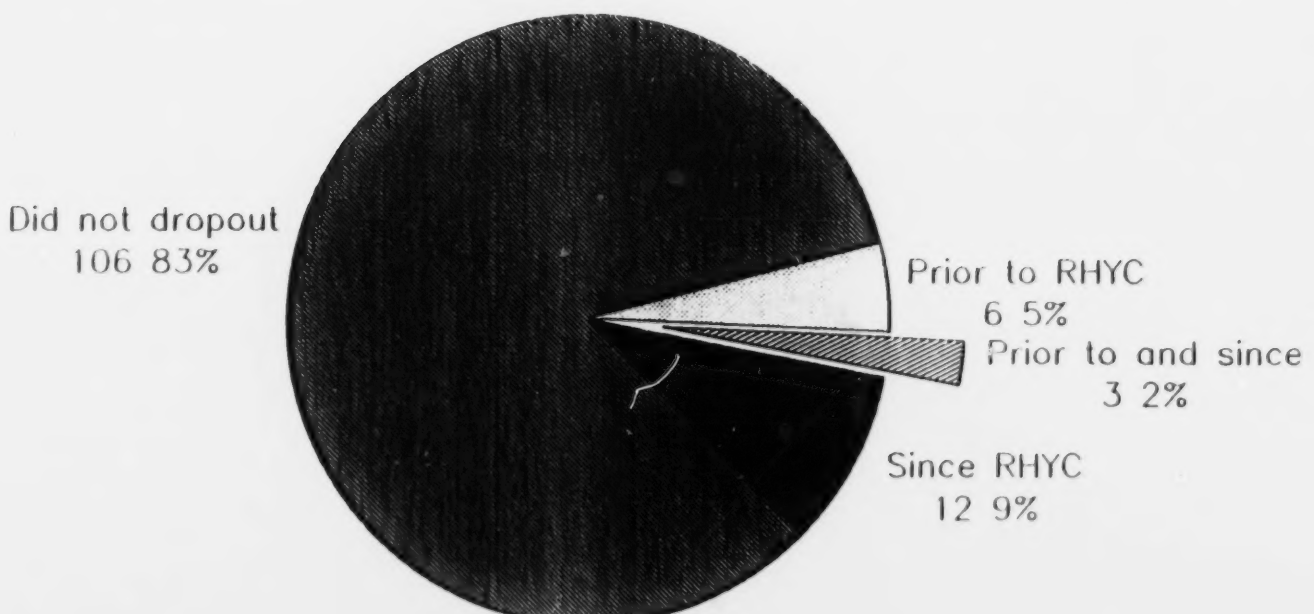


Exhibit SB5.2

The separate slice represents 3 youth who dropped out prior to the RHYC stay and remained drop-outs

Another third (34%) had completed the 8th grade. Twenty percent had completed the 9th grade; 15 percent had completed the 10th grade; and four percent had completed the 11th grade.

The two later points in time show the expected progression through school. At the time of the interview, 94 youth were enrolled in a junior or senior high school on a regular basis (five of the 94 are in the 7th grade or below; eight youth are in the 8th grade; 81 are in senior high school in grades nine through 12.). Three youth are taking courses designed to help them pass the GED exams. Five youth are in some type of post-secondary school (college, technical or business school), and one youth is being tutored.

Youth's perceptions of improvement in schooling. Over half (51%) state that at the time of the interview, their educational situation is "much better" than it had been. Nearly one fourth (24%) rate their situation as "somewhat better." For 22 percent it has remained "about the same", and for three percent it is has become worse: "somewhat worse" for 1.5 percent and "much worse" for 1.5 percent.

Youth for whom education was a presenting problem. Education was listed as a presenting problem for 26 (20.5%) of the youth. Fifty percent of the 26 youth for whom education was reported as a presenting problem state that, at the time of the interview, their situation is "much better." Nineteen percent say it is "somewhat better." Thirty one percent rate it as "about the same." None say that the situation with their schooling has worsened.

The youth who say that their schooling has improved generally ascribe this to having "a better attitude" now, or having "learned how to follow rules." One of the youth specifically ascribes the improvement to a counselor at the RHYC, explaining that the counselor at the RHYC was easier to talk to than the

school counselor because the school counselor would report everything back to the youth's mother.

Yet another says that school is better now because he "stopped cutting classes."

Other comments show the youth's awareness of the link between school and other aspects of their lives: "[I'm doing better at school] because I don't do drugs anymore;" and "My parents are back together ... so I'm able to concentrate on my school work."

Summary. For the majority of the youth, their school situation has improved. Seventy five percent of all youth say that their school situation is better, as do 69 percent of the youth for whom education was identified as a presenting problem. See Table 5B5.1.

Eighteen of the 23 in-school youth who had been mostly skipping classes are attending school on a regular basis at the time of the interview; six of the former dropouts have returned to school, as have the three youth who had been suspended or expelled prior to their stay at the RHYC.

On the negative side, the number of dropouts has increased from nine youth (7%) to 15 youth (12%) — five males and 10 females, meaning that although six of the original nine dropouts have returned to school, an additional 12 youth have left school prematurely.

6. Employment

For the same reason that we asked youth about their sources of financial support, we asked youth about any part-time or full-time jobs they may have had prior to the time they went to the RHYC and about jobs at the time of the

Table 5B5.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
EDUCATION
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Former drop-outs who have returned to school	67%	6 out of 9
Youth who were formerly mostly skipping classes who are no longer skipping classes.	78%	18 out of 23
Youth who were formerly had been suspended or expelled from school who are now either in school or have graduated or obtained a GED.	100%	3 out of 3
Youth for whom education was identified as a presenting problem who rate their school situation as "much better" or "somewhat better" than it was at the time when they went to the RHYC.	69%	18 out of 26
Youth perception of change		
Youth who rate their school situation as much better or "somewhat better" than it was at the time they went to the RHYC.	75%	95 out of 127
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who are either attending school, or have graduated from high school, or have obtained a GED.	88%	112 out [illegible]
Youth enrolled in school who are attending school on a regular basis.	72%	91 out of 103

interview. Findings show that, for the most part, their job patterns are not unlike what one would expect of most teenagers.

Indicators of positive change include employment for youth who are no longer in school. Indicators of well-being consist of lack of employment problems for youth who are working.

Employment status prior to the youth's stay at the RHYC and at the time of the interview. In the month prior to the stay at the RHYC, 57 percent of the youth had been holding down jobs. By the time of the interview, this number has decreased to 40 percent.

The five most frequently held jobs both prior to the stay at the RHYC and at time of the interview were: work in the food service industry (42% and 22%, respectively); in retail sales (12.5% and 13%, respectively); childcare/babysitting (37.5% and 5%, respectively); housework/cleaning (14% and 5%, respectively); and yardwork/gardening (8% and 2%, respectively). Note that as these youth get older, they are employed less in unskilled jobs (such as babysitting, house cleaning and yard work). Other occupations included construction worker, messenger, clerical/office worker, house painter, factory worker, hospital or nursing home aide, and camp counselor.

Employment status of youth who aren't in school at the time of the interview. At the time of the interview, only 13 of the 24 youth who are not in school are employed. Below is a list of the type of jobs held by these youth (note that three youth held down two jobs).[8]

Restaurant work — five youth

Clerical work — three youth

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8 The youth were not asked whether these were full or part-time job.

Housework — two youth

Retail — two youth

Construction —one youth

Painting — one youth

Factory — one youth

Hospital or nursing home — one youth

Other work (not specified) — one youth

Enlistment in Armed Forces or the Job Corps. Of 127 youth, five have been in the Job Corps. At the time of the follow-up study, two are still enrolled Corps (both youth were high school graduates), and the other three dropped out before completion of the program.

Three males have been in the military: one each in the Army, National Guard, and High School ROTC. At the time of this follow-up, two are active in the reserves and one has been discharged.

Youth's perceptions of improvement in employment situation. Youth were asked to compare their employment situation at the time of the interview with their situation immediately prior to going to the RHYC. For half the youth, the question was considered not applicable. For the 65 youth who answered this question, 37 percent state that at the time of the interview their employment situation is "much better" than it had been. Twenty two percent state that their situation is "somewhat better." Thirty seven percent say it is "about the same", and for five percent it is worse: "somewhat worse" for three percent and "much worse" for two percent.

Summary. It is not clear whether employment is a positive outcome for adolescents who are enrolled in school. However, for youth who are not in

school, employment is a positive indicator. One of the outcome measures, therefore, is employment for the 24 youth who are no longer in school, either because they graduated or because they dropped out. The data show that only 54% of the 24 youth are now employed. (These 24 youth consists of 15 drop outs, and nine youth who have completed high school.) In addition, two of the youth have been in the Job Corps, but both left prior to completing the program. See Table 5B6.1.

Note that of the youth who have worked, 96 percent say that their situation in terms of work is either the same or better than it was prior to their stay at the RHYC.

7. Physical Health

Recent research on runaway and homeless youth have indicated that these youth are less healthy than the average adolescent, that they eat poorly, and that they have less access to medical care. It seemed therefore appropriate to ask these youth about their health and the adequacy of their diets, and to determine whether they have regular medical and dental care. [9] Positive changes in physical health include improvement in health for youth who formerly rated their health as "poor" or "fair." General indicators of well being include: regular medical care and fewer report illnesses and physical complaints, a sense of physical well-being, and adequate diet.

Youth's rating of their physical health. Thirty youth (24%) say that at the time they went to the RHYC. their health was "excellent." Fifty-nine youth (46%) say that is was "good" at that time. Twenty-six youth (20%) describe

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9 Questions regarding drug and alcohol abuse, safe sex practices, and pregnancy and parenthood are covered in later sections of this chapter.

Table 5B6.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
EMPLOYMENT
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
[No data were collected on prior employment problems]		
Youth perception of change		
Youth for whom employment has remained the "same" or is now "somewhat" or "much better."	96%	60 out of 65
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who are not enrolled in school (dropouts and graduates) who are employed or in the Job Corps.	54%	13 out of 24

their health as having been "fair," and twelve youth (9%) say that it was "poor."

Of the 30 youth who rate their health as having been "fair" or "poor" prior to the RHYC stay, 25 rate it as "good" or "excellent" at the time of the interview. On the other hand, seven youth who say that their health was formerly "excellent" or "good," now rate it as either "poor" or "fair."

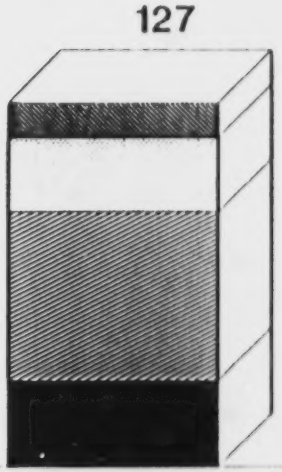
Overall, however the youth's health appears to have improved. While 70 percent rate it as "excellent" or "good" before they went to the RHYC, 85 percent assigned these ratings at the time of the interview. See Exhibit 5B7.1.

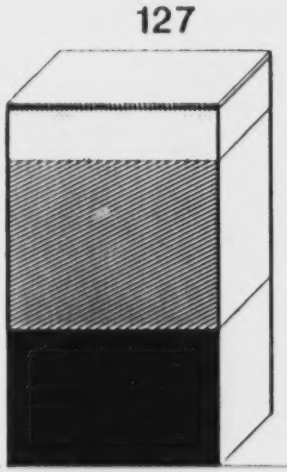
Self-reported health problems. Twenty youth (16%) say they had specific health problems or disabilities prior to going to the RHYC. The youth report the following problems: asthma and bronchial problems (6 youth); a bad knee (3 youth); high blood pressure (2 youth); and heart or circulatory disease, ulcers and stomach problems, epilepsy, cancer, back injury, syphilis, thyroid problems and allergies (each reported by one youth). In addition, one youth mentioned a learning disability as a health problem, and one youth says he/she was run down.

Interestingly enough, although the general self-assigned health ratings improved, there has been an increase, from 20 to 24 youth, in the number of youth who say that they have a health problem or a disability at the time of follow-up. This change resulted primarily from an increase in the number of youth who say they have asthma or bronchial problems (an increase from six to 11), and one youth reports alcoholism as a health problem. Fewer youth report knee or back problems or allergies.

Physical health

Before RHYC and at time of interview





	Before RHYC	At time of interview
Poor	12	2
Fair	26	18
Good	59	59
Excellent	30	48

Ratings by the youth

Exhibit 5B7.1

Medical and dental care. To get a better understanding of the youth's health, questions were asked regarding the most recent dental and medical care, and about their diet. Two thirds of the youth have seen a dentist in the past year; 16 percent in the last two years, and 17 percent more than two years ago.

About 85 percent of the youth say that they have received some form of medical care within the past year; seven percent last saw a doctor one to two years ago, and eight percent more than two years ago. Reasons for seeking medical care were: routine checkups (70%), emergencies (22%), and specific non-emergency medical problems (7%). The emergencies included: accidents (14 youth), infections (4 youth), a drug overdose, stomach problems, heart disease, "crabs," and pneumonia (each one youth).

Quality of diet. At the time of the interview, over half of the youth say that their diet is either "good" (41%) or "excellent" (14%). Thirty-one percent described it as "fair," and 14 percent as "poor." Asked about the adequacy of the amount of food that they usually eat, 71% indicated that they "always" have enough to eat and 23 percent say that they "usually" have enough to eat. Seven youth (5. 5%) say that they "often don't have enough to eat;" and one youth reports never having "enough to eat."

Youth's perceptions of improvement in physical health. The youth were asked to compare their physical health at the time of the interview to the way it was at the time immediately prior to going to the RHYC. Thirty percent state that at the time of the interview their physical health is "much better" than it had been. Seventeen percent state that their health is "somewhat better." For 43 percent it is "about the same", and for 10 percent it is worse: "somewhat worse" for eight percent and "much worse" for 2 percent.

Summary. These health measures are included in this report as indications of general adolescent well-being, even though many of these are not factors that can be directly influenced by the interventions of the RHYC. The majority of the adolescents appear to be in good health, to be getting routine medical and dental care, and to be eating fairly well. See Table 5B7.1. Furthermore, 90 percent of the youth who formerly had no health problems state that at the time of the interview their health has not declined.

There is also a reported improvement in the health of those who formerly rated their health as "fair" or "poor" and those who formerly reported physical health problems. Fourteen of these 20 youth have ongoing health problems including: asthma (one youth), heart problems [10] (2 youth), high blood pressure (one youth), a thyroid problem (one youth), knee problem (one youth), epilepsy (one youth), and cancer (one youth). In addition, 2 youth listed alcoholism and a learning disability as health problems.

8. Mental Health

Staff in RHYCs have for some time now been reporting that the youth whom they see are showing increasingly high levels of depression. The mental health section for this study covered past and current self-reported depression, suicide attempts and hospitalizations for mental illness.

In addition, the youth were asked a number of questions regarding level of mental distress in the month prior to the interview. How often has the youth felt 1) fearful or afraid, 2) sad or depressed, 3) angry, 4) mixed up or confused, 5) nervous or worried, and 6) as if he/she didn't want to go on

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10 These are "diagnoses" reported by the youth themselves.

Table 5B7.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
PHYSICAL HEALTH
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who formerly rated their health as "fair" or "poor" who now rate it as "good" or "excellent".	66%	25 out of 38
Youth who formerly reported physical health problems and now report none.	30%	6 out of 20
Youth perception of change		
Youth who rate their physical health as "much better" or "somewhat better" than it was at the time they went to the RHYC.	47%	60 out of 127
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who rate their health as "good" or "excellent."	84%	107 out of 127
Youth who report no physical health problems.	81%	103 out of 127
Youth who have received routine physical check-ups in the past year	60%	76 out of 127
Youth who rate their diet as either "good" or "excellent".	55%	70 out of 127
Youth who state that they always or usually have enough to eat.	86%	109 out of 127
Youth who had dental care in the past year	66%	84 out of 127

living.[11] Change indicators for mental health include decrease level of depression, and no repeat suicide attempts for youth with prior suicide attempts. We cannot assume that no repeat hospitalization for mental illness is a positive sign since for some youth hospitalization may be necessary and therefore desirable.

For all youth, indicators of mental health well-being include: a low level of mental distress and no suicide attempts.

Depression prior to stay at RHYC. Over one third of the youth (44 youth, 35%) say that at the time they went to the RHYC, they were "very" depressed. An additional 23 youth (18%) say that they were "quite" depressed, and 46 youth (36%) say they were "somewhat" depressed. The remaining 14 youth (11%) say they were not depressed at that time.

Suicide attempts. We asked the youth whether they ever tried to take their life prior to the time that they went to the RHYC, and since that time. Findings show that 40 youth, nearly one-third (32%) had tried to commit suicide prior to the time when they went to the RHYC and that seven of these youth have attempted suicide again in the months after leaving the RHYC. Another ten youth who had not attempted suicide prior to going to the RHYC tried to take their life in the months after leaving the RHYC. This means that, in all, 50 youth (39 percent of the 127) report a suicide attempt either before or after, or both before and after their stay at the RHYC. See Exhibit 5B8.1

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11 These questions have been adapted from the Denver Community Mental Health Questionnaire. Since they are an adaptation of this instrument, they are not normed.

Suicide attempts
Before going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC

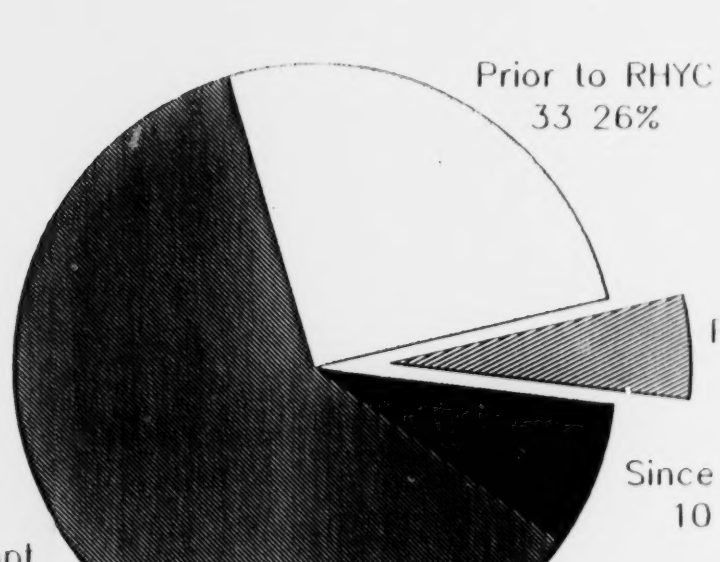


Exhibit 5B8.1

The separate slice represents 7 youth who report a suicide attempt both prior to, and since leaving the RHYC

Eighty-four percent of the youth who report a suicide attempt were female. In fact, over half (51%) of the young women report ever having tried to take their life versus 18 percent of the boys.

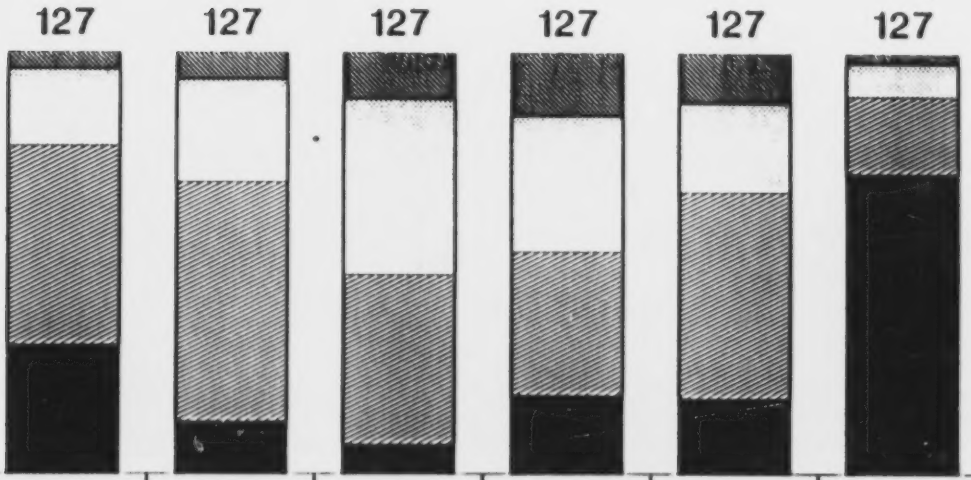
Hospitalization for mental illness. Nearly one out of every eight youth (13%) had stayed in a hospital overnight because of emotional problems or mental illness prior to the time when they went to the RHYC, and nine percent since that time.

Mental distress score at the time of the interview. For the month preceding the interview, slightly over half the youth say that they almost always or often felt angry. Nearly half say the were "almost always" or "often" confused. Over one third say they were "almost always" or "often" worried, and "about the same" proportion say that they were "almost always" or "often" sad. Twenty two percent say that they were "almost always" or "often" afraid. And finally, 10 percent of the youth say that in the past month they have "almost always" (2%) or "often" (8%) feel as if they did not want to go on living. See Exhibit 5B8.2

For each youth, a mental distress score was calculated by adding the youth's frequency rating for each of these six signs of mental distress: "1" for never, "2" for once or twice, "3" for often, and "4" for almost always. The lowest possible score is a six (a youth who never felt any these emotions in the past month); the highest possible score is 24, a youth who almost always felt each of these emotions. The youths' scores ranged from seven to 23. For females, the mean score is 13.55. For males, it is lower, 11.64. This finding of higher mental distress among the young women corresponds to their higher rate of attempted suicides.

Depression

Youth self-reports for month preceding the interview



	Afraid	Sad	Angry	Confused	Worried	Not go on living
Almost always	5	8	14	19	15	3
Often	23	31	53	41	27	10
Once or twice	60	72	51	43	62	23
Never	39	16	9	24	23	91

N=127

Exhibit 588.2

There also has been a significant difference in mental distress by age, with the older youth having higher mental distress scores than the younger youth. See Table 5B8.1.

Youths' perceptions of improvement in mental health. All youth were asked to compare their mental health at the time of the interview to the way it was at the time immediately prior to going to the RHYC. Over three-fourths (76%) indicated improvement: 43 percent state that at the time of the interview their mental health is "much better" than it had been; 33 percent state that it "somewhat better." For 17 percent, mental health is "about the same", and for eight percent it is worse: "somewhat worse" for seven percent and "much worse" for one percent.

Youth for whom mental health was a presenting problem. Despite these findings of a high level of self-reported mental distress, mental health was identified as a presenting problem for only 13 percent of the youth. Most of these youth noted improvement and say that their mental health was now "much better" (44%) or "somewhat better" (25%). A number of youth directly ascribe the improvement to the counseling at the RHYC. Table 5B8.2 lists some of the comments made by these youth regarding improvement in mental health.

Nineteen percent say that their mental health has remained "about the same". One youth states: "Nothing really changed, but I found other releases such as sports, and my drawings and writing."

Six percent say that their mental health is "somewhat worse" and six percent say that it is "much worse." One youth was not ready to accept help from the RHYC. This thirteen year old girl who attempted suicide both prior to her stay at the RHYC and after leaving there, and who was also hospitalized prior to and after her stay there, explains: "I wasn't willing to get help from

Table 5B8.1

Mean Mental Distress Score by Age

The youth's age at time of interview	Mental distress score	Standard deviation
11	11.00	-
13	12.40	1.82
14	12.00	3.59
15	12.43	4.11
16	13.81	3.30
17	12.09	3.18
18	13.06	3.13
19	15.75	3.77

Table 5B8.2

EXAMPLES OF EXPLANATIONS GIVEN BY YOUTH
FOR IMPROVEMENT IN MENTAL HEALTH

12-year old boy (no suicide attempts or hospitalizations):

> "I had therapy at the [RHYC]. They helped me resolve problems I was having in the neighborhood. They said if the other kids wanted to fight, walk away."

17-year old girl (suicide attempt and mental hospitalization prior to stay at RHYC):

> "I don't get depressed as often when looking at myself. I quit doing drugs. I like myself. I found a decent guy. I care about my family and they care about me. I also believe in God."

14-year old girl (suicide attempts both prior to stay at RHYC and since that time; no hospitalization):

> "I don't think about committing suicide anymore. I grew up a lot. I've matured."

14-year old male (suicide attempts both prior to stay at RHYC and since that time, hospitalization in the months since stay at RHYC):

> "They helped me know myself better than I did. They kept me from destroying myself."

14-year old girl (suicide attempts both prior to stay and since that time):

> "I learned how to get in touch with my feelings. I learned about feelings I didn't know I had. I learned how to communicate with others."

16-year old girl (suicide attempt and hospitalization prior to stay at RHYC):

> "[Staff at the RHYC] helped me learn to control my temper. They helped me change my attitude. That was my main problem. They helped me deal with some things that happened in my life and put them in perspective. [My counselor] helped me understand myself beter — why I did certain things. After leaving [the RHYC], I talked with [a counselor] once a week about any problems I had. I learned to look at things from other people's perspective. I'm not as selfish. I'm more self-confident."

15-year old girl (suicide attempt prior to time that she went to the RHYC, and hospitalization since then):

> "I have learned to deal with feelings and talk about problems. And I have better communication with my stepmom."

14-year old girl (no suicide attempts, no hospitalization):

> "I look at things in a more positive way. I started to go to the support group at school. Things are looking better now."

RHYC so I ran away from [the RHYC]." Another was not satisfied with the counseling at the RHYC. He feels that the [RHYC] didn't really help that much: "Group counseling was stupid. No one there wanted to talk. I would talk sometimes."

Summary. Overall, approximately three-fourths of the youth report improvement. Eight two percent of the youth who report a former suicide attempt have not repeated the attempt. Even with this improvement it should be noted that 17 youth (13 percent) report a suicide attempt in the months since leaving the RHYC. See Table 5B8.3.

Eight of the 67 youth who formerly were "very" or "quite" depressed rate their mental health problems as now "much" or "somewhat worse" at the time of the interview; seven youth rate it as ""about the same"," and 52 youth say they are "somewhat" or "much better."

9. Substance Abuse

These questions address the adolescents' use of alcohol and other drugs, and the effects thereof. Change indicators include decrease in alcohol and drug use, and in drug dealing. Indicators of well-being include: not using alcohol or drugs and not dealing drugs.

Frequency of alcohol use. Twenty-seven (22%) say they never drank alcohol prior to the time that they stayed at the RHYC. Forty nine youth (39%) state that they have not had a drink in the months since they left the RHYC. With a few notable exceptions, those who have had an alcoholic drink report an overall decrease in alcohol consumption between the two time periods. See Exhibit 5B9.1.

Table 5B8.3

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
MENTAL HEALTH
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who attempted suicide prior to going to the RHYC and have not attempted suicide again.	83%	33 out of 40
Youth perception of change		
Youth who rate their mental health as "much better" or "somewhat better" than it was at the time when they went to the RHYC.	76%	97 out of 127
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Number and percent of youth who have not attempted suicide since leaving the RHYC	87%	110 out of 127
Youth who in the past month have "never" or "only once or twice" felt sad or depressed.	69%	88 out of 127
Youth who in the past month have "never" or "only once or twice" felt angry.	47%	60 out of 127
Youth who in the past month have "never" or "only once or twice" felt mixed up or confused.	53%	67 out of 127
Youth who in the past month have "never" or "only once or twice" felt nervous or worried.	67%	85 out of 127
Youth who in the past month have "never" felt like he/she did not want to go on living.	72%	91 out of 127
Youth who in the past month "never" or "only once or twice" felt fearful or afraid	78%	99 out of 127

Self-reported alcohol use

Prior to and since going to RHYC

N=127

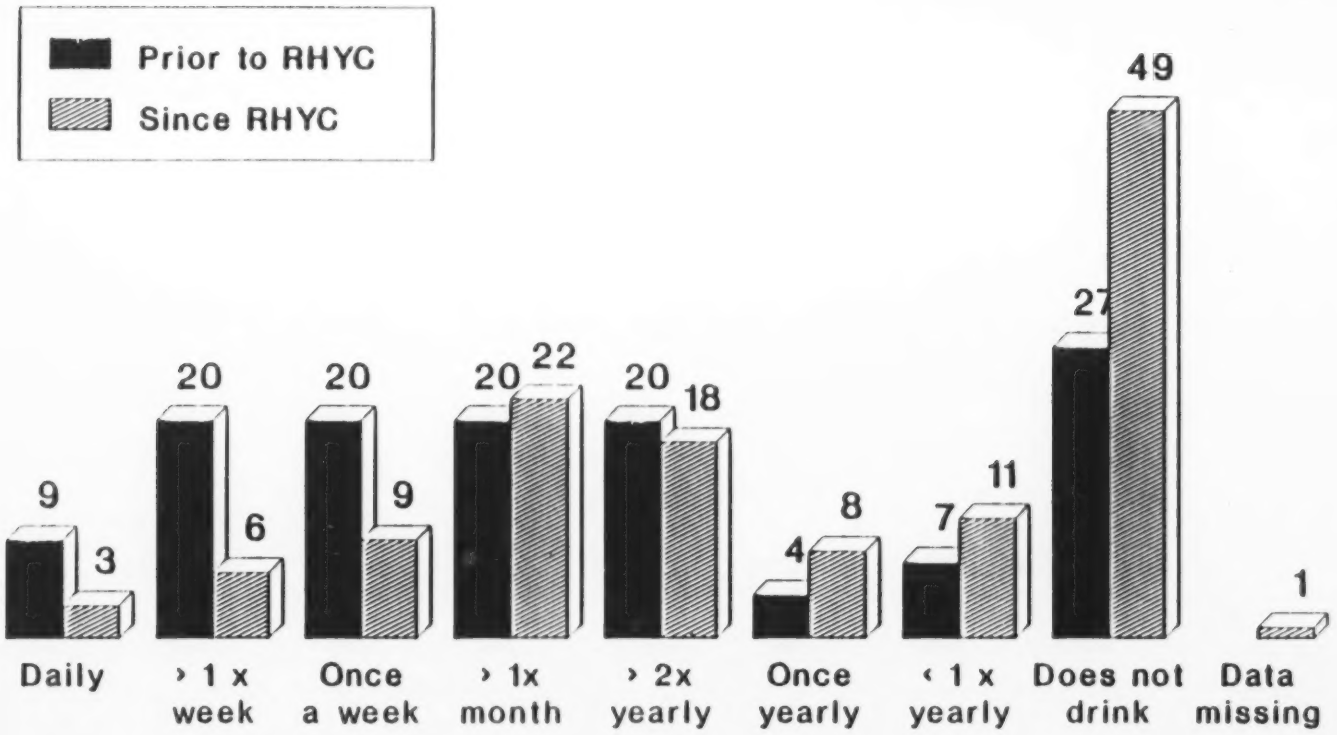


Exhibit 5B9.1

- Nine youth (7%) report daily alcohol abuse in the time prior to their stay at the RHYC. This number has decreased to 2 percent by the time of the interview. Of the nine youth who formerly drank alcohol on a daily basis, four have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC, two still drink daily, and one now drinks less often.

- Twenty youth (16%) report drinking in the past once a week or more but less than daily. By the time of the interview, the number of youth with this frequency of alcohol consumption has decreased to five percent. Of the 20 youth who formerly drank several times a week, six youth have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC, four drink at "about the same" level, and 10 drink less frequently.

- Twenty youth (16%) report that prior to the RHYC stay, they were drinking several times per month, but not as often as weekly. By the time of the interview, nine youth (7%) of youth report this level of drinking. Of the 20 youth who formerly drank several times per month, five still drink about as often, seven have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC, and the others drink less often.

- Another 20 youth (16%) report drinking less than once a month but more than twice yearly during the earlier time period. This number decreased to 17 percent at the time of the interview. Of these 20 youth, four have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC, three drink more frequently, 10 have not changed, and three youth drink less frequently.

- Twenty-four youth (19%) indicated that prior to the time when they went to the RHYC, alcohol consumption happened infrequently, at the most once or twice yearly. At time of follow-up this number of infrequent drinkers has remained fairly constant (it was now 21%). Of the former 24 infrequent drinkers, nine have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC, one now drinks on a daily basis, three drink several times per month, and the others have remained infrequent drinkers.

Consequences of alcohol abuse. It is clear from the following data that a number of the youth had been experiencing problems with alcohol abuse prior to the time when they went to the RHYC. Of the 100 youth who had used alcohol, 21 percent say that they had experienced blackouts; 32 percent report getting into fights with other people as a result of alcohol use; 21 percent had gotten into arguments with people who wanted them to drink less; and, 16 percent had been

expelled or suspended from school because of alcohol abuse. In addition, one young woman had been arrested for driving under the influence; six youth for being drunk and disorderly, and nine for under-age use of alcohol.

Far fewer of these negative consequences of drinking are reported for the months since the youth left the RHYC. Of the 78 youth who report drinking, 11 percent report experienced blackouts; six percent report getting into fights; four percent report getting into arguments about their drinking. Furthermore only one youth reports being arrested for driving under the influence, three youth report being arrested for under-age drinking.

Other types of drug abuse. In terms of other drug abuse, the self-reported data show the same trend towards decreased drug use over time as did alcohol use. This is an interesting finding since one would expect that an increase in alcohol and drug use as the youth get older.

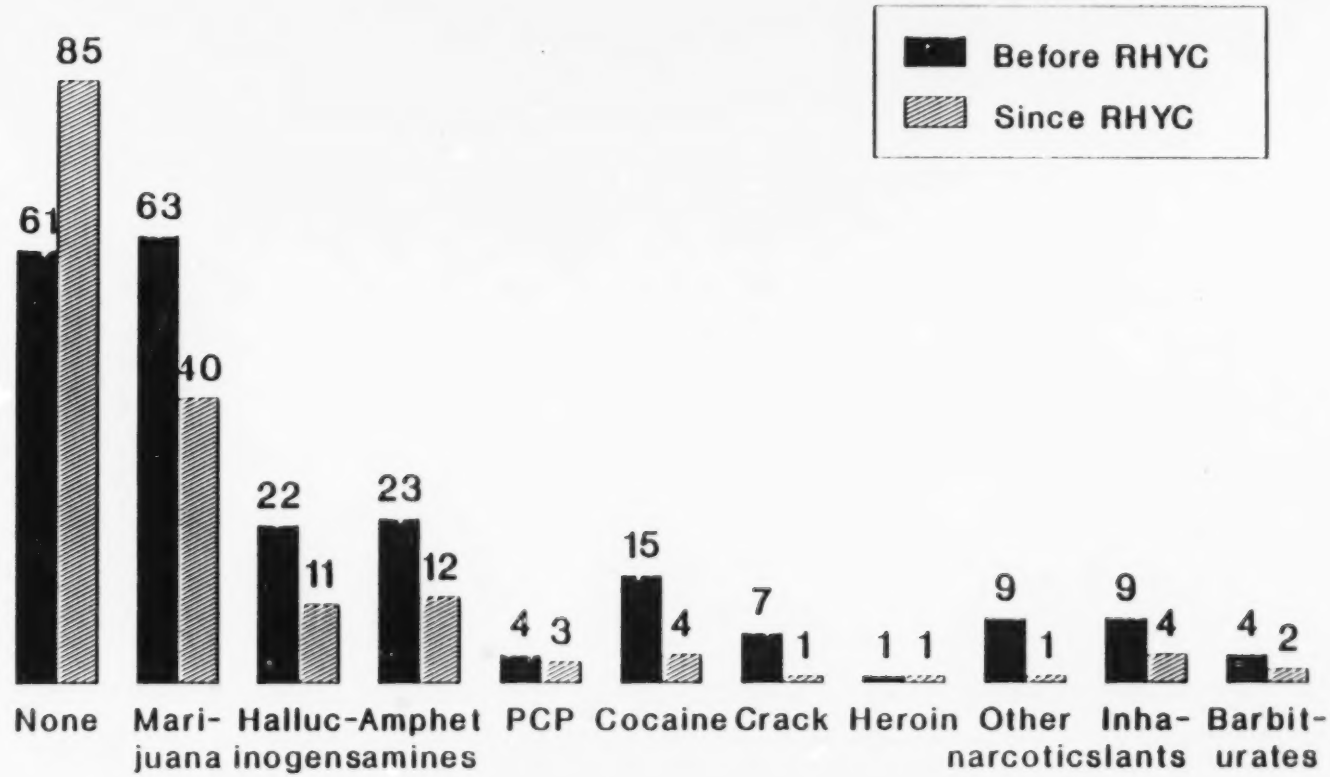
At the time that the youth went to the RHYCs, nearly half (48%) report never having used illegal drugs. Two thirds of the youth (67%) report not having used illegal drugs in the months since leaving the RHYC. See Exhibit 5B9.2.

For those who do use drugs, marijuana use was cited the most frequently for both periods in time: prior to going to the RHYC nearly half of the youth (50%) report marijuana use; since leaving the RHYC, slightly less than one-third (31. 5%) report marijuana use.

Other self-reported drug use prior to and after the youth's stay is described below:

- Amphetamines (e. g. speed, uppers, bennies) were used by 23 youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by 12 youth in the subsequent months.

Self-reported drug use
Prior to going to the RHYC and since leaving the RHYC



N=127

Exhibit 5B9.2

- Hallucinogens (e. g. LSD, acid, mescaline) were used by 22 youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by half that many, 11 youth, in the subsequent months.

- Cocaine not including crack was used by 15 youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by four youth in the subsequent months.

- Inhalants (e. g. glue, white-out, paint, poppers) were used by nine youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by four youth in the subsequent months.

- Narcotics other than heroin (e. g. methadone, codeine and morphine) were used by nine youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by one youth in the subsequent months.

- Crack (or "rock") was used by seven youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by two youth in the subsequent months.

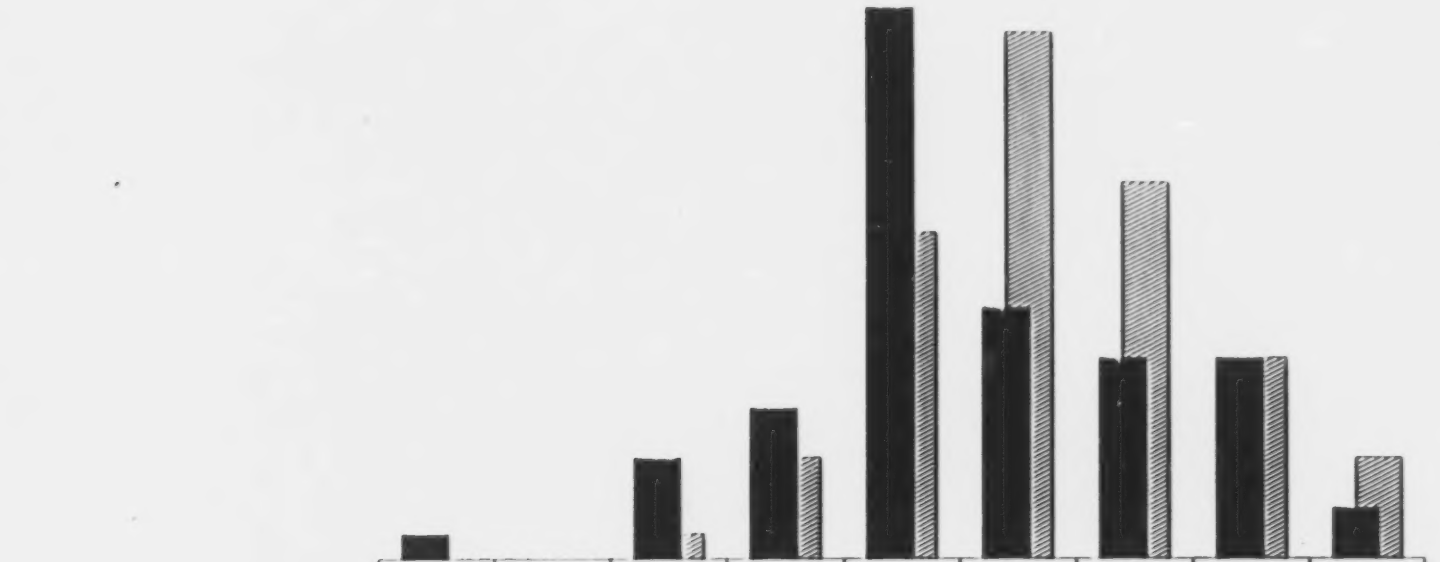
- Barbiturates and tranquilizers were used by four youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by 2 youth in the subsequent months.

- PCP (e. g. angel dust, dust or loveboat) was used by four youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by three youth in the subsequent months.

- Heroin was used by one youth in the time period preceding their stay at the RHYC, and by no youth in the subsequent months.

Differences in drug use by age. As Exhibit 5B9.3 shows, drug use in this sample is more prevalent among the youth who are ages 16 and older than among the younger youth. Note that the ages in this table correspond to the ages of the youth at the time of the interview. Of the five 13 year olds, 20 percent report drug abuse. The rate of drug use is about the same for the 14 and 15 year olds: 40 percent of the 10 fourteen-year olds report drug use as do 37 of the 35 fifteen-year olds. The rate increases for the 16 and 17 year olds: 68 percent of the sixteen-year olds report drug use as do 65 percent of the 23 17-year olds. All four 18-year olds report having used drugs, as have two thirds of the six youth over age 18.

Self-reported drug use by age
Prior to stay at RHYC



	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18	Over 18
No drug use	1		4	6	22	10	8	8	2
Drug use	0		1	4	13	21	15	8	4

Age at time of interview

Exhibit 5B9.3

Differences in drug use, by gender. Exhibit 5B9.4 shows differences in drug use patterns by gender for 66 youth who report drug use: 23 males (51% of the 45 males in the sample), and 43 females (53 percent of the 82 females). The data show that the boys who use drugs use more drugs than do the girls. The only drug that is reported being used more frequently by the girls in this sample is barbiturates. The use rate for amphetamines is the same. All other drugs are used by proportionately more boys than girls. The differences and similarities between male and female use is described below:

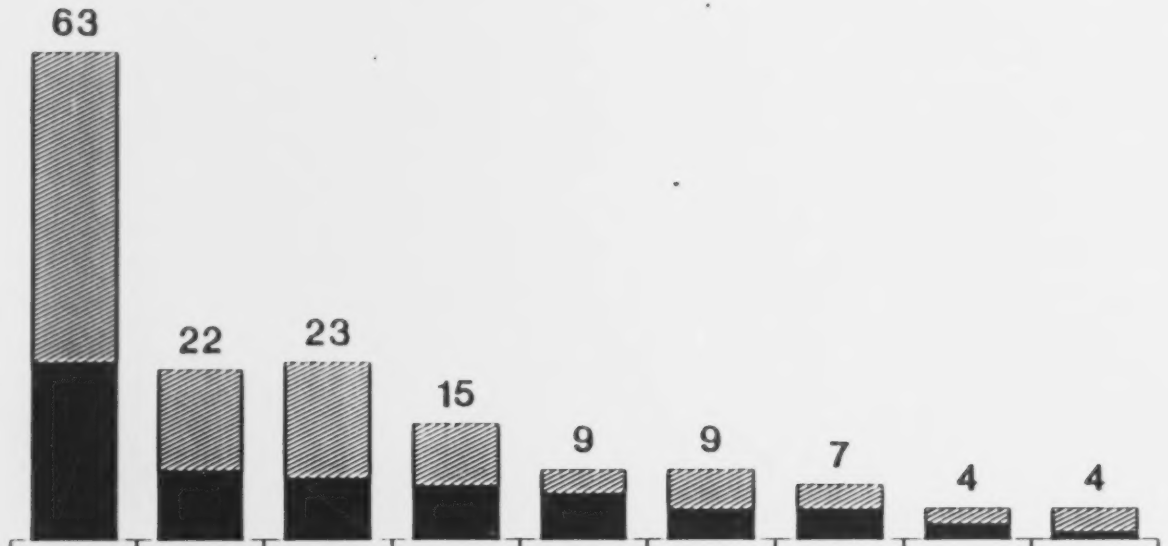
- Marijuana is used by all 23 boys and by 40 of the 43 girls (93%).
- Amphetamine use is the same for males and females: 35 percent report use.
- Proportionately more boys (39%) than girls (30%) report using hallucinogens.
- Considerably more boys (30%) than girls (19%) report cocaine use.
- Methadone use is also higher among the boys (26%) than the girls (7%).
- There is less disparity in terms of inhalant use, although the use among the boys is somewhat higher (17%) than among the girls (12%).
- More boys (17%) than girls (7%) have used crack.
- More boys (9%) than girls (5%) have used PCP.
- The only drugs that more girls report having used are barbiturates: seven percent of the girls versus four percent of the boys.

I.V. drug use. Three youth report injecting drugs with a needle in the period before they went to the RHYC: two report cocaine injection, and one reported heroin injection. In the months since leaving the RHYC one youth reports having injected heroin with a needle. These three youth were asked how they protect themselves from AIDS/HIV infection. The following safety

Self-reported drug use by gender

Prior to stay at RHYC

N = 23 males and 43 females



	Mj	Halluc inogens	Amphet amines	Co-caine	Meth-adone	Inha-lants	Crack	PCP	Barbit urates
Female	40	13	15	8	3	5	3	2	3
Male	23	9	8	7	6	4	4	2	1

22 males report no drug use

39 females report no drug use

Exhibit 5B9.4

precautions were mentioned: one youth says that he did not share needles and only used sterilized needles. One youth says that he no longer used needles. The third youth did not answer this question.

Drug dealing. Seventeen youth report dealing drugs prior to the time when they went to the RHYC. Six youth (a decrease of 11 youth) report dealing drugs in the months since leaving the RHYC. Note that only one of these youth reported drug dealing as a source of financial support when the youth were asked to list means of support. There are several possible explanations to this inconsistency. One is that the question about the financial support had a very specific time reference, namely the time "immediately before" going the RHYC, while the time reference for drug dealing was "have you ever in the time before going to the RHYC" been involved in drug dealing. Another possibility is that these youth are not heavily involved in drug dealing and do not consider it their main source of support. Even the youth who reported drug dealing as a source of income, was living at home with his mother at that time and listed her as a source of support.

Several youth ascribe the fact that they longer deal drugs to the stay at the RHYC:

"[The RHYC] kept me out of trouble. It occupied my time, so I wouldn't do things I would normally do like deal and do drugs."

"After I left the [RHYC], I quit doing drugs for 90 days. And now I am no longer using or selling drugs."

Consequences of drug use. In terms of negative consequences of drug use, prior to the stay at the RHYC, 19 of the 66 youth who report illegal drug use say that they have gotten into fights as a result of drug use; 24 had been in arguments about their use of drugs and 12 had been either expelled or suspended

from school. Five report an arrest at that time: two youth for being disorderly, three youth for possession, and one youth for dealing. Since their stay at the RHYC, two youth report being arrested for possession, one youth says that he/she has been arrested because of drug use but did not specify the charge, and one youth has been suspended or expelled from school because of drug use.

Youth's perceptions of decrease in youth's alcohol or drug use. All youth were asked to compare their alcohol and/or drug use at the time of the interview to the way it was at the time immediately prior to going to the RHYC. The question was answered by 111 youth. Over one half (64%) state that at the time of the interview the situation was "much better" than it had been, meaning that it had decreased. Twelve percent say the situation was "somewhat better." For 15 percent it was "about the same", and for nine percent it was worse: "somewhat worse" for five percent and "much worse" for four percent.

Youth for whom substance abuse was identified as a presenting problem. Several indicated a greater awareness of the role of parental alcohol abuse. For instance, here are comments made by two youth:

"I'm now looking into ACOA issues (Adult Children of Alcoholics). My mom is an active alcoholic. Dad is a workaholic and a gambler. The [RHYC] helped me become more independent. My self-esteem is getting to be much better. Part of me is more understanding of my parents. I can tell them I love them and I understand their problems."

The counselor at the [RHYC] helped me understand my mother and her alcohol problem.

Most of the youth have decreased their use of drugs and alcohol, and directly ascribe this to the RHYC, either because of the counseling or because

they weren't able to use drugs during their stay there and found out they could do without. See Exhibit 5B9.5.

On the other hand, a number of youth specifically state that their reduced drug use was not due to the RHYC intervention: "I don't do drugs anymore, but it's not because of the services that I received at the [RHYC]." Another states being able to discontinue drug use only for a while: "[After leaving the RHYC], I didn't use drugs for a temporary period, but I am using drugs again now."

For at least one youth, the change did not occur until after leaving the RHYC: "At the group home where I went after leaving the [RHYC], I would try to sneak alcohol. I don't do that anymore. I don't feel like I need it now. I'm a lot happier because I don't live at that group home anymore. I live with my uncle." For additional comments, see Table 5B9.5.

Summary. For both drug use and alcohol use, about one third of the youth who report prior use have discontinued use since leaving the RHYC. Thirty-one percent of the 100 youth who report drinking alcohol prior to the RHYC say that they have not had a drink since leaving the RHYC. Forty-five percent of the youth who report prior drug use say that they have not used drugs since leaving the RHYC. In all, 76 percent of the youth who report drug or alcohol use say that the use has declined. See Table 5B9.1.

10. Juvenile Justice and Legal Problems

As the data below indicate, many runaways have contact with the police and other juvenile authorities because of their runaway status. In asking the youth about contact with the police and arrests, we tried to distinguish

Table 5B9.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who have not had a drink of alcohol since leaving the RHYC	31%	31 out of 100
Youth who stopped drug use since leaving the RHYC	50%	30 out of 60
Youth who were formerly involved in drug dealing who are no longer involved in drug dealing	65%	11 out of 17
Indicators of change for who formerly had no problems		
Youth who rate their situation in regards to substance abuse as "much better" (meaning that the abuse has decreased) or "somewhat better" than it was at the time when they went to the RHYC.	76%	84 out of 111
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who report no alcohol use since leaving the RHYC	37%	49 out of 127
Youth who report no drug use since leaving the RHYC	67%	85 out of 127
Youth who are not involved in drug dealing	97%	123 out [illegible]

EXHIBIT 5B9.5

EXAMPLES OF EXPLANATIONS GIVEN BY YOUTH
FOR DECREASE IN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE

"My mind was opened. I had a very closed mind previously. I didn't want to listed to anyone about my drug use. I just wouldn't hear it. One of the counselors at the [RHYC] just sat me down and made me listen. After this person would make me sit down every day and make me listen, I realized I had a drug problem and needed to do something about it. Group counseling made me realize I wasn't the only one with problems. It made it easier to accept. Without the substance abuse, my life is much better. There's no more shortage of fun due to drugs. There's no one screaming at me because I wanted to do drugs."

"I quit doing drugs while at the [RHYC] because I couldn't get a hold of any drugs. This caused me to dry out, and I started to feel a lot better about myself once I was off drugs. I realized I didn't need them. I had gotten on them so I wouldn't have to face reality. Even though I had wanted to get off, I couldn't and this caused major depression."

"I quit drugs. I get along with people better. I'm not as tired. I got a better look at myself. Today things are much better. I have more money. I can support myself and my baby. I have a nice house, and am more comfortable."

"[The counseling] helped me open up, and talk about how I was feeling. The school I attend referred me to a treatment center. I was just released a week ago. I learned how to communicate better with my family. I learned about my disease. I got in touch with my feelings I didn't know were there."

"I'm not sure [the RHYC] had anything to do with the changes. Although, I guess since I was at the center for four days, I didn't use any drugs. So I had time to think and realize that I didn't need them."

"[The RHYC] referred me to Alcoholics Anonymous. They kept me from drinking every day, and helped me to communicate more, not to put such a wall up. I was also referred to Narcotics Anonymous. I'm not using like I was. I don't use drugs anymore. I very seldom drink. Also, I'm more independent. I'm not low on money anymore."

between contacts and "arrests" that were related to running away, and those that resulted from delinquent acts.

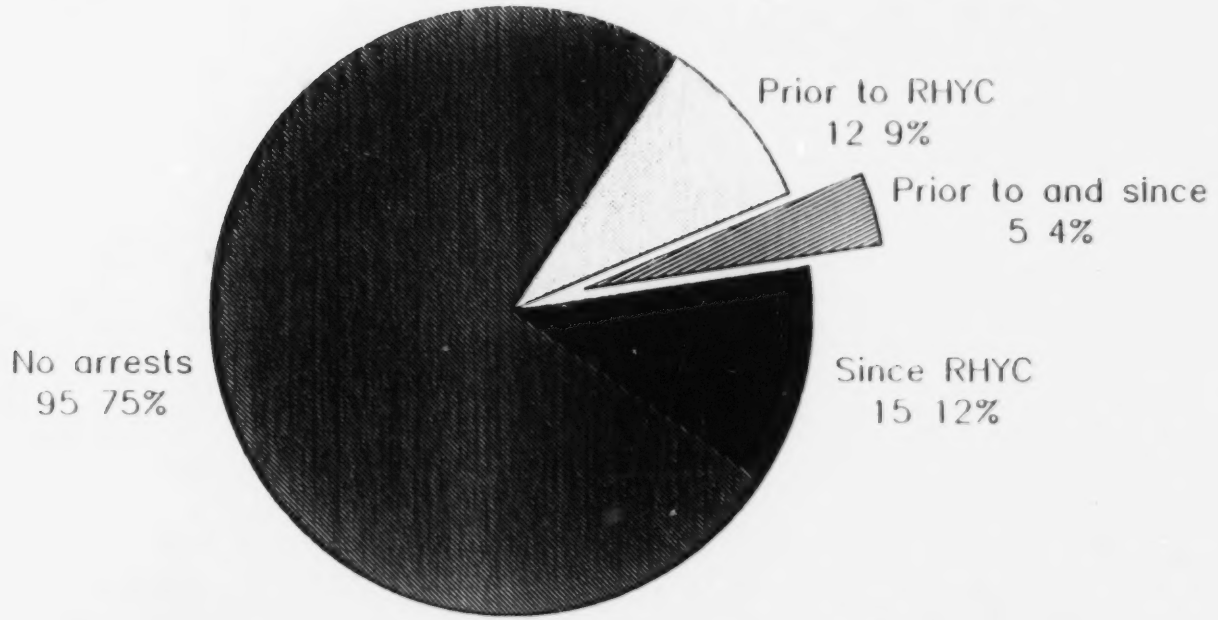
Change indicators for this module includes no repeat arrests for those with prior arrests. Indicators of well-being include number and percent of youth who have not been arrested since leaving the RHYC.

Youth-reported problems. Over one-third of the youth (50) indicated that they experienced trouble with the law or the police prior to the time when they went to the RHYC. For 22 youth, the reason for their contact with the police was related to their running away. The youth's comments listed in Exhibit 5B10.1 lists some of the reasons why the youth came to the attention of the police. These experiences reflect the different relationships that police have with RHYCs and different local policies towards finding and returning runaways.

Twenty-eight youth were arrested. Reasons for the arrests were specific delinquent acts including: breaking into a supermarket, underage use of alcohol, disorderly conduct, curfew violation, shoplifting, stealing a car, stealing a motorcycle, and stealing stereos from a store. Charges were filed against 17 of these youth—all 17 were charged in juvenile court. The dispositions were as follows: eight youth were put on probation, three had to do community service work, two youth were sent to a RHYC, four were placed in other programs ("juvenile hall, a group home, a treatment center, and a "training center"). See Exhibit 5B10.2

At the time of the interview, nine of these youth have been arrested again. Five of the nine have had a court hearing: one in adult court and four in juvenile court.

Arrests followed by court hearings Prior to, and since, the time youth went to the RHYC



These figures cover only arrests that result in court hearing. Five youth were arrested pre and post RHYC stay

Exhibit SB10.1

Exhibit 5B10.2

EXAMPLES OF EXPLANATIONS GIVEN BY YOUTH FOR TROUBLE WITH LAW OR POLICE PRIOR TO STAY AT RHYC

"I kept running away. Mom called police, and they would wait by my house, sometimes they would look for me but I always came home."

"I was running away from home. I was in a club, and I hit my mom and a cop when they came to pick me up because I was a runaway. They put me in [an RHYC]. Then I ran away and cut myself in [another RHYC]."

"Because I was a runaway. I got into trouble with my parents, and they told me to get out, so I left. They called the cops and said I was a runaway. The cops came and got me, then took me home. I left right away. I went back to school. The cops went to school to talk to me, then my mom was going to pick me up after school, but I didn't show up. I went to the mall. Cops found me later at my house then took me to the Attention Home."

"Me and my dad got into a fight, he hit me. I ran away from home. The police and my parents were looking for me. The center knew where I was. I contacted my counselor at [another RHYC]. She suggested that I stay at [this RHYC] for two weeks."

"I left home because of my boyfriend. At the time I thought he was more important. I was told by a police woman I had to either go home, or to the Spectrum Center."

In addition, another 15 youth who had not been arrested prior to their stay at the RHYC have been arrested in the months following their stay at the RHYC, and have been charged in juvenile court.

This means that in all 20 youth have been arrested in the months following their RHYC stay. The outcomes have been as follows: one charge was dismissed; one youth was sentenced to an adult jail (the jail sentence has since been completed); 13 youth were placed on probation (nine youth are still on probation at the time of the interview); four were sentenced to community service work; and the outcome of one case is still pending.

Youth's perceptions of decrease in juvenile justice problems. Youth who have been involved at one time or other with the law and the police were asked compare their situation at the time of the interview with their situation immediately prior to going to the RHYC. Seventy-three youth responded to the question. Forty youth say that, at the time of the interview, their situation in relation to the law and the police is "much better" than it had been. Thirteen state that their situation is "somewhat better." For nine youth, it has remained "about the same"; and for 11 youth it was described as being worse: "somewhat worse" for six youth and "much worse" for five youth.

Youth for whom juvenile justice was identified as a presenting problem. Juvenile justice and legal problems were listed as a major presenting problem for three youth, ages 15 to 17.

Summary. In terms of the youth's involvement in delinquency there appears to have been improvement for the youth with prior histories of juvenile arrests. Nineteen of the youth who were arrested prior to the time that they went to the RHYC report no repeat arrests.

On the other hand, 15 youth who had not been arrested prior to the RHYC stay report being arrested in the months thereafter. Overall therefore there has been an increase in the arrest rate: from 13 percent prior to the RHYC stay to 19 percent in the months thereafter. See Table 5B10.1.

11. Sexual Behavior

This section looks at how many of the youth are sexually active. Because of the finding that many runaway and homeless youth engage in survival sex, the section also included a number or questions regarding the use of sex in trade for food, shelter or drugs. However, in this group of runaway, rather than homeless, youth only three young women said that they had traded sex for food and shelter, and in one case also for drugs. A related concern is the fact that these youth are at-risk for AIDS. The questionnaire therefore also included questions regarding safe sex practices.

Sexually active youth. Over one half of the youth (75 youth, 59%) say that prior to the time that they went to the RHYC they had engaged in intercourse.

Nine of the these 75 youth state that they have not been sexually active in the months since leaving the RHYC. Four of the youth indicated that this due to fear of AIDS.

In the months since leaving the RHYC, an additional 28 youth engaged in intercourse. This means that in all 103 youth (81%) are sexually active.

Safe sex practices. In response to questions regarding safe sex behavior, these 103 youth gave the following answers:

- 71 youth (69%) used condoms
- 70 youth (69%) have a sexual relationship with one steady partner.
- 33 youth (32%) decreased the number of people with whom they have sex.

Table 5B10.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
JUVENILE JUSTICE
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who were arrested prior to the time that they went to the RHYC and who have not been arrested since.	68%	19 out of 28
Youth's perception of change		
[No data were collected on the youth's perception of change for juvenile justice issues].		
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Youth who have not been arrested since the time they left the RHYC	81%	103 out of 127
Youth who are not on probation	93%	118 out of 127

- o 19 youth (18%) ask a potential partner about AIDS before having sex
- o 4 youth (39%) practiced abstinence and say that they no longer engaged in sexual intercourse.

Most of the 71 youth who used condoms also practiced at least two of the other safe sex practices, the most frequent ones being having a steady partner or reducing the number of partners. However, it should be noted that the term "steady partner" was not defined. Nor were any questions asked regarding current or previous number of sexual partners.

Forty-three percent of the youth of whom this question was asked say that the RHYC helped them understand how to protect themselves against AIDS.

Summary. Of the 110 youth who were asked the question regarding safe sex, all indicated that they take at least one precaution. Unfortunately, however only 71 report using condoms. The youth did indicate awareness of AIDS. Forty-three percent state that the RHYC helped them understand how to protect themselves against AIDS. See Table 5B11.1.

12. Pregnancy and Parenthood

Adolescent parenthood is a risk for any adolescent who is sexually active, and perhaps even more so for youth who feel cut off from the mainstream (or, in the case of youth who have run away or been pushed out, from their families). Considering the many problems faced by these young people four to 24 months ago (many of which are still unresolved), pregnancy and parenthood cannot be viewed as desirable. Yet, as the data below indicate, at the time of the interview nine young women were pregnant, and as a group the young women had already given birth to seven children.

Table 5B11.1

NUMBER OF YOUTH INDICATING
CHANGE AND WELL-BEING WITH RESPECT TO
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for youth with prior problems		
Youth who report trading sex for food, shelter or drugs who no longer do so	100%	3 out of 3
Youth's perception of change		
[No data were collected on youth's perception of change]		
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Sexually active youth who use condoms	69%	71 out of 103
Youth who have not used sex in trade for food, drugs or shelter since leaving the RHYC.	99%	126 out of 127

Pregnancies and parenthood. Nearly one-third of 82 young women in the sample report being pregnant either before or after the RHYC stay (23 young women, 28%). Six had been pregnant prior to the time when they went to the RHYC (one had been pregnant twice). In addition, two young women were pregnant at the time that they sought services at the RHYC. For both, this was the first pregnancy. In all, eight young women became pregnant prior to their stay at the RHYC. Together these eight young women had nine pregnancies: three pregnancies ended in miscarriage, three in an induced abortion, and two in a live birth. At the time that the mothers of these two infants went to the RHYC, one of the infants was in the care of the youth's parents. The whereabouts of the other infant was not determined.

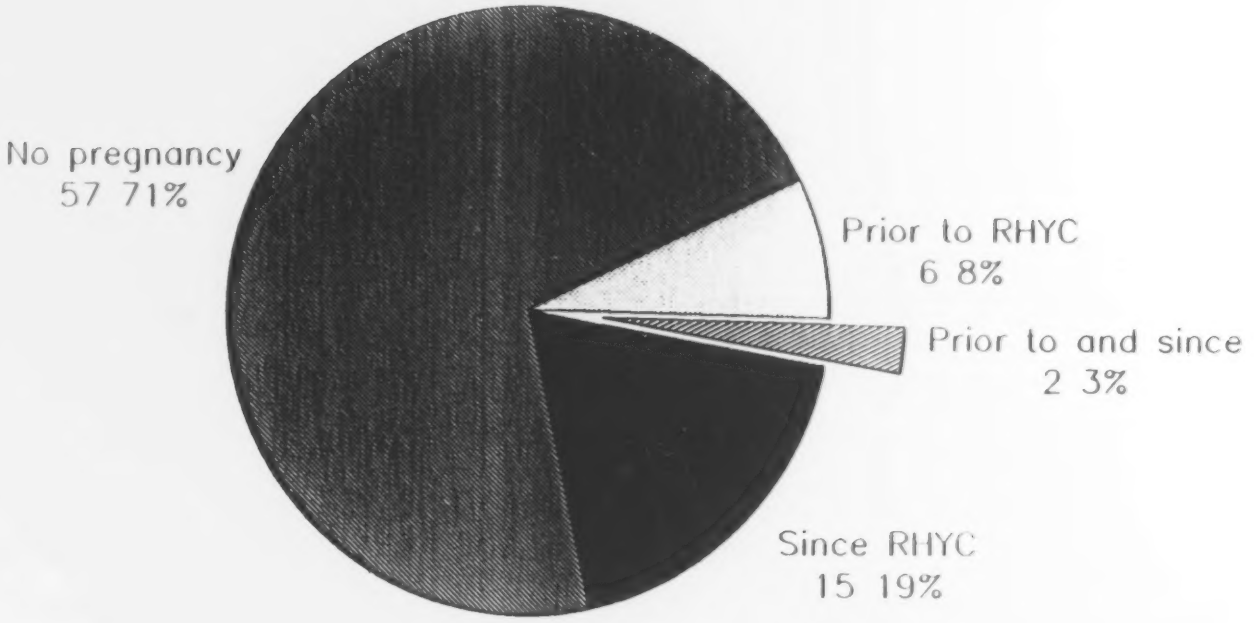
In the months since leaving the RHYC, 17 young women became pregnant, two of them twice. Two of the 17 had also been pregnant prior to the stay at the RHYC: for one young women this was her second pregnancy, for the other it was her third pregnancy. Nine of the respondents are pregnant at the time of the interview. See Exhibit 5B12.1.

Of the other pregnancies, five ended in a live birth. At the time of the interview, three of the babies live with the respondent (one of whom is married), one baby is in the care of the mother's parents, and one baby has been released for adoption. This means that, counting all pregnancies, these young women have given birth to seven children.

None of the 65 young men in the sample say they fathered children prior to the time when they went to the RHYC or in the months since leaving the Center. However, one youth says that his girlfriend is pregnant.

Prenatal care. The young women who report a pregnancy were asked about prenatal care. Of the eight young women who were pregnant prior to or at the

Pregnancies
Prior to, and since, the time youth went to the RHYC



N=81

Nine are pregnant at the time of the interview

Exhibit 5B12.1

time that they went to the RHYC, four say that they went to a pre-natal clinic on a regular basis and kept their appointments. The others had pregnancies that ended in a miscarriage or in an induced abortion.

Of the 17 young women who report a pregnancy after leaving the RHYC, 14 say that they receive prenatal care. All but one say that they receive the care on a regular basis and keep their appointments.

Self-reported changes related to pregnancy or parenthood. The majority of the 23 young women who report pregnancies say that their situation has improved in regards to issues related to pregnancy, parenthood and family planning. Only one youth says that the situation has become "somewhat worse."

Youth for whom pregnancy or parenthood was a major presenting problem. Pregnancy and parenthood was identified by staff as a major presenting problem for one 16 year old female. This young women, whom the RHYC referred to a maternity home, says that her situation has remained the same.

Summary. Twice as many young women have become pregnant in the months since they left the RHYC as were pregnant prior to, or at the time that they went to, the RHYC. Part of this is, of course, due to the fact that they are now older.

The other indicators are positive. Most of the eight youth who were pregnant prior to, or at the time that they went to, the RHYC, have not become pregnant again. With one exception, those who were pregnant at the time of the interview are receiving regular prenatal care. The majority of these young women feel that their situation is now "much better" or "somewhat better." See Table 5B12.1.

Table 5B12.1

INDICATORS OF CHANGE AND WELL-BEING
PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD
(Measured at the time of the interview)

	Percent	Number of youth
Indicators of change for young women with prior pregnancies		
Women with prior pregnancies who have not become pregnant again.	75	6 out of 8
Indicators of change for all young women who are or have been pregnant		
Women who have been or are pregnant who rate their situation as "much better" or "somewhat better" than it was at the time when they went to the RHYC.	96	22 out of 23
Women who are receiving prenatal care on a regular basis.	93	13 out of 14
Indicators of well-being for all youth		
Young men who are not adolescent fathers and whose girlfriends are not pregnant.	97	44 out of 45
Young women who have never been pregnant.	72	59 out of 82

C. Youths' Impressions of RHYCs

To better understand the youth's experiences at the THYCs, the youth were asked several questions regarding their satisfaction with the services that they received at the RHYC and regarding their parents' satisfaction with these same services. This section presents their answers to these questions and lists some of the youth's recommendations for improving the RHYC where they each stayed.

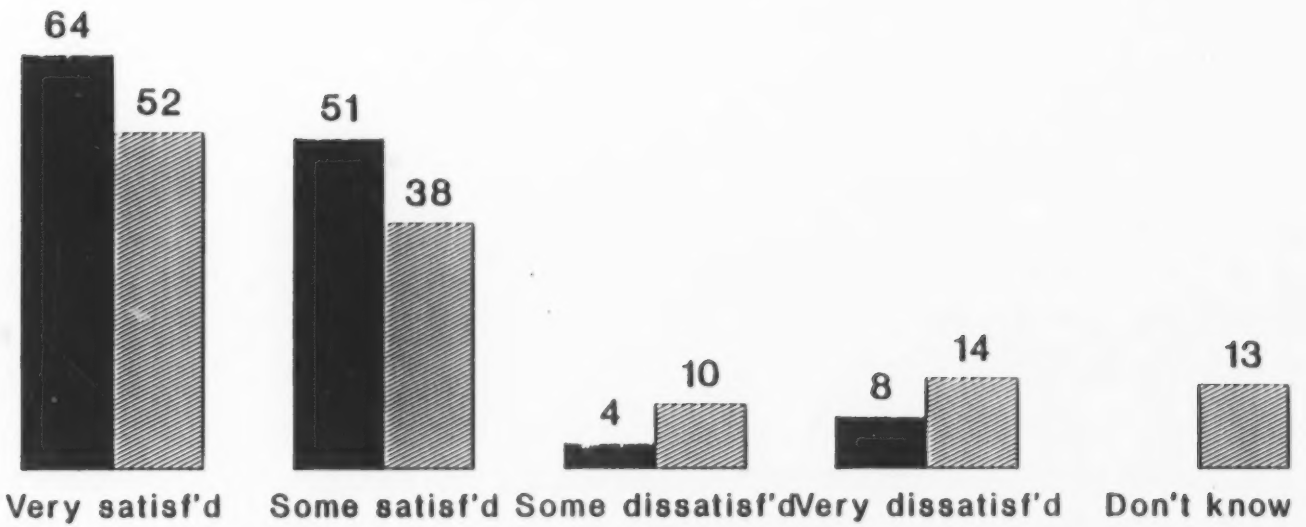
Satisfaction with Services

The overwhelming majority of the youth say they are satisfied with the services they received at the RHYC. One half (50%) are "very satisfied"; 40 percent are "somewhat satisfied." Three percent feel "somewhat dissatisfied, and six percent feel "very dissatisfied."

According to what the youth say, the parents in general have been less satisfied than the youth. Forty-one percent of the parents, versus 50 percent of the youth, are said to be "very satisfied." Thirty percent of the parents, versus 40 percent of the youth, are reported to be "somewhat satisfied." Eight percent of the parents versus three percent of the youth, are described as "somewhat dissatisfied." Eleven percent of the parents, versus six percent of the youth, are said to be "very dissatisfied". One youth explains: "My mother has been very unhappy about the changes I put her through before and after I went to [the RHYC]. I feel hurt she feels that way." An additional ten percent of the youth say that they do not know how their parents feel about the services that their son or daughter received at the RHYC. See Exhibit 5C.1

Satisfaction with RHYC services

Youth satisfaction and parental satisfaction as reported by youth



N = 127

Youth Parent

Exhibit 5C.1

The youth were asked whether they would send a friend to the RHYC. The overwhelming majority (87%) say that they would (and, in fact 28 percent have done so). Eleven percent would not; and 2 percent are not sure.

Youth suggestions for improving the RHYC

In response to an open-ended question regarding ways to improve the RHYC and to provide additional and needed services, the youth made the suggestions listed in Table 5C.1. The three most frequently made suggestions, offered by over 10 percent of the 127 respondents, were a) to have fewer restrictions; b) to have more counseling; c) to physically improve the facility (one youth suggests that the RHYC find someone to donate funds to improve the building).

In terms of additional counseling, the youth speak of services that they would have liked to receive while at the RHYC. Comments by those who feel more services are needed say that they would have liked: "someone to talk to," "alcohol and drug counseling," "more information on sexually transmitted diseases," and "more caring." Three youth would have liked to have had greater family involvement.

TABLE 5C.1.

SUGGESTIONS MADE BY YOUTH
ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE RHYC

Youth-recommended change	Number of youth making suggestion
Fewer restrictions	24 youth
More counseling, more caring, more group talks, someone to talk to talk to	23 youth
Better facilities, better outside appearance	15 youth
Better food, more activities	12 youth
More experienced staff with more respect for the kids	11 youth
More supervision	3 youth
Independent living program	3 youth
Medical care	3 youth
Greater family involvement	3 youth
Information on drugs and alcohol and on sexually transmitted diseases	2 youth

D. Comparison with Data Collected for ACYF by the RHYCs Nationwide

How does our sample compare with the universe of youth served by runaway and homeless youth shelters that receive funding from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act? About 41 percent of the RHYCs voluntarily submit Youth Information Forms (YIF) for youth receiving shelter and ongoing services (of the remaining 49 percent of the grantees, some submit only partial data). It should be noted that although YIF data is collected for less than half the youth, the data have been remarkably consistent since data collection began in 1985.

For the following data in the YIF database, comparable information was collected from the interviewed youth in our sample: demographic characteristics (gender, age, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment), information on family of origin, the youth's reason for leaving home, the youth's living arrangement before going to the RHYC and after discharge from the RHYC. For some of these variables, data are available for all youth in the study sample: interviewed youth as well as non-interviewed youth. Other data are available only for the interviewed youth based on the information they provided during the interview.

In interpreting the comparisons between the study data and the YIF data, it is important to keep in mind both the limited submission of the YIF data and its year-to-year consistency. The YIF data are reported in the "Annual Report to the Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, Fiscal Year, 1989"[12]

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12 Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children Youth and Families, Office of Human Development Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. March 28, 1990.

Race/ethnicity

Comparison with 1989 YIF data

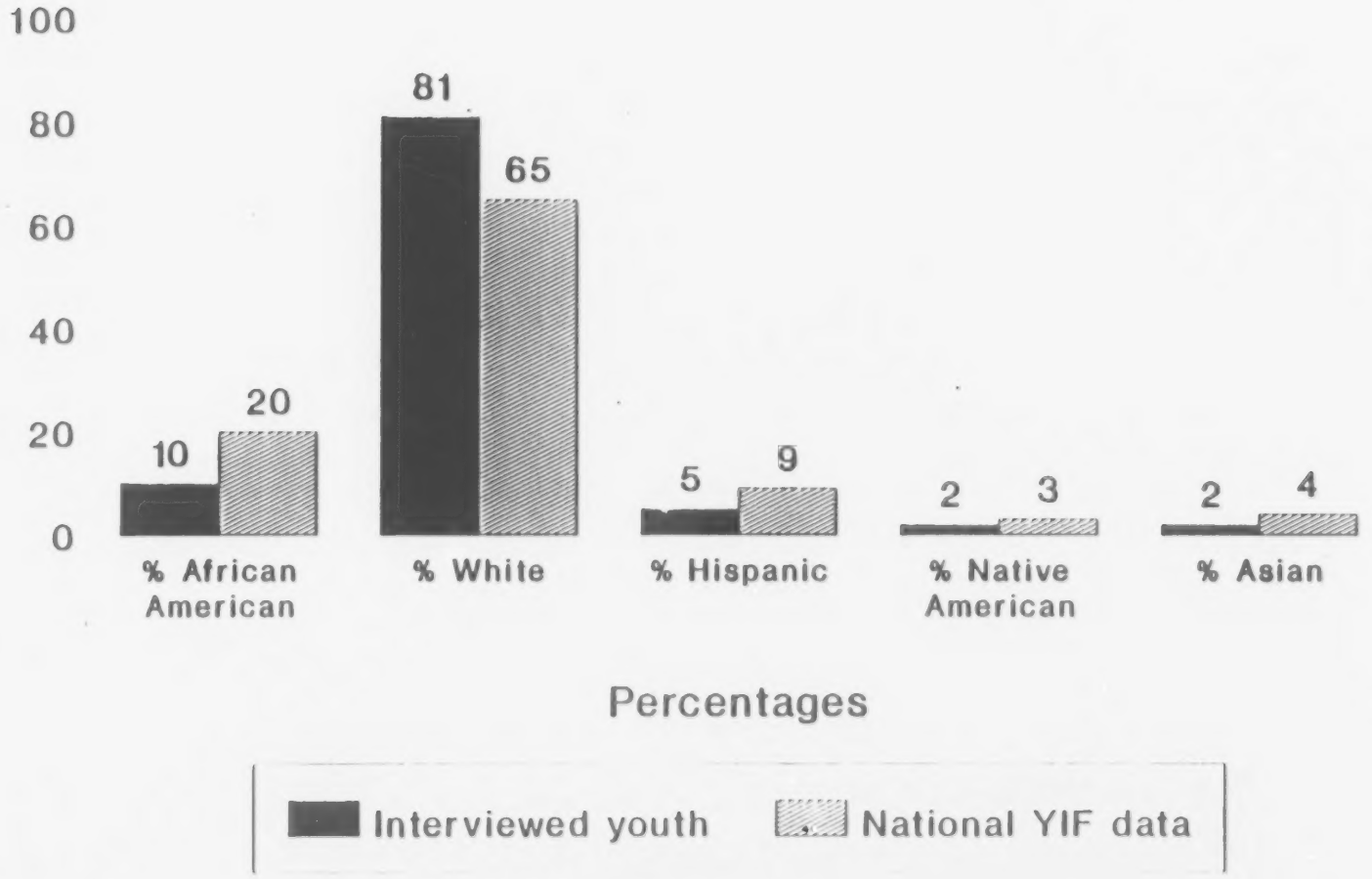


Exhibit 5D.1

School attendance at time youth went to RHYC

Comparison with the YIF data

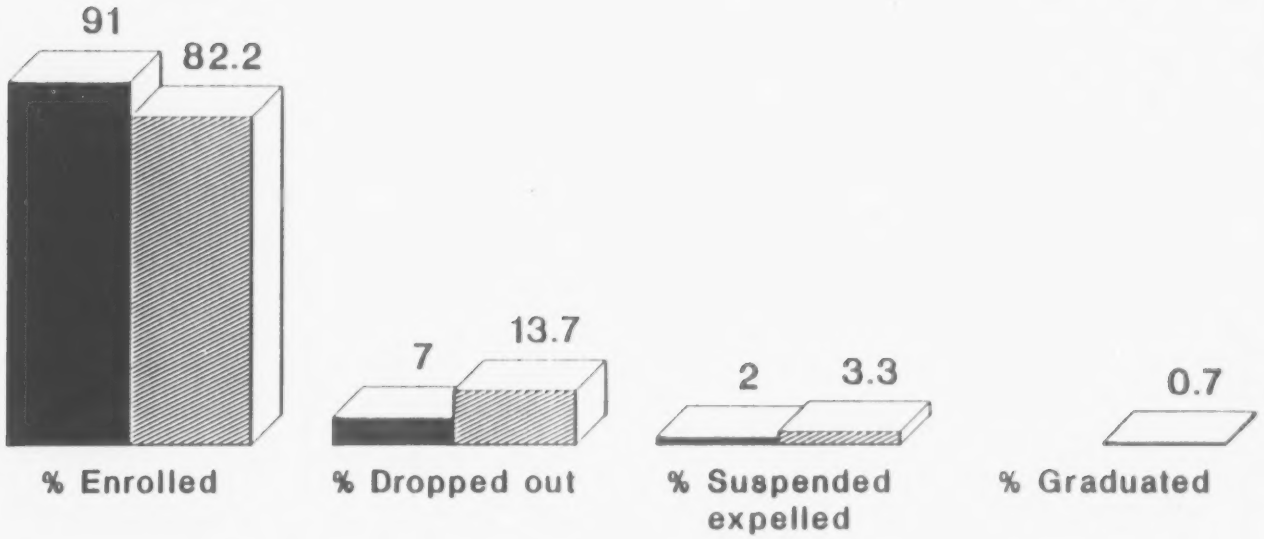


Exhibit SD.2

that also presents information the distribution of the RHYCs by state and by HHS region.

Comparison between YIF data and total study sample

For the following variables, we are able to make comparisons between our total sample of interviewed and non-interviewed youth and the YIF data: location of RHYC, race, gender and age. To a limited extent, comparisons can also be made of presenting problems.

- **Race/ethnicity of the youth.** Data on race/ethnicity are available on 319 youth. For 3 of the non-interviewed youth, this information is not available. There were more white youth and fewer minority youth in the YIF sample. See Exhibit 5D.1.

- **Gender.** There were fewer males in our sample than in the YIF sample. In the YIF sample, 56 percent were female and 44 percent were male. In the sample selected for this study. 62 percent were female and 38 percent were male. These percentages are based on 303 youth.

Comparison between the YIF data and data on interviewed youth

For the following variables, some limited comparisons can be made between the interviewed youth only and the youth covered by the YIF data: educational attainment, youth-identified parent figures, living situation before the youth went to the RHYC and after the youth left the RHYC. (These data are not available for the non-interviewed youth as they are data collected during the interview.)

- **Educational attainment.** In terms of education, the school enrollment data for the interviewed youth differs slightly from the YIF data. Proportionately more youth in the study sample were enrolled in school (83%) than in the national YIF sample. See Exhibit 5D.2

- **Identified parent figures.** More interviewed youth (86%) than youth for whom YIF data were collected (75%) said that the person whom they consider to be their mother is their birth

mother or mother by adoption. Approximately the same number of youth identified a stepmother, foster mother or relative. More of the youth in the YIF database said they had no mother figure. More interviewed youth (55%) than youth for whom YIF data were collected (36%) said that the person whom they consider to be their father is their biological father or father by adoption. Proportionately a few more youth identified a stepfather, foster father or relative. Considerably more youth in the YIF data base said that they had no father figure. See Exhibit 5D.3

- **Living situation before youth went to RHYC.** There appear to be only minor differences between the living situation prior to the RHYC for the interviewed sample and the YIF sample. Approximately 80 percent of both youth lived in the home of at least one biological or adoptive parent. Approximately 10 percent of both groups lived with a guardian or adult relative, and about 5 percent of both groups lived in group homes or other facilities for youth (including hospitals and juvenile justice facilities). The only difference between the two groups is that fewer youth in the YIF sample were reported to have been on their own or on the streets before coming to the RHYC. This may be a function of the way the data were reported.

- **Living situation after youth left the RHYC.** The youth were asked where they stayed immediately after leaving the RHYC. Exhibit 5D.5 compares their responses with the information provided in the YIF on the youth's whereabouts after they left the RHYC. It should be noted that there is a major difference in the source of these data on these two groups. The data for our study are based on the youths' reports (4 months to 24 months later) about where they went immediately after leaving the RHYC. The information for the YIF sample is based on data recorded at the time of the youth's discharge from the RHYC.

Mother figure identified by youth
Comparison with YIF data

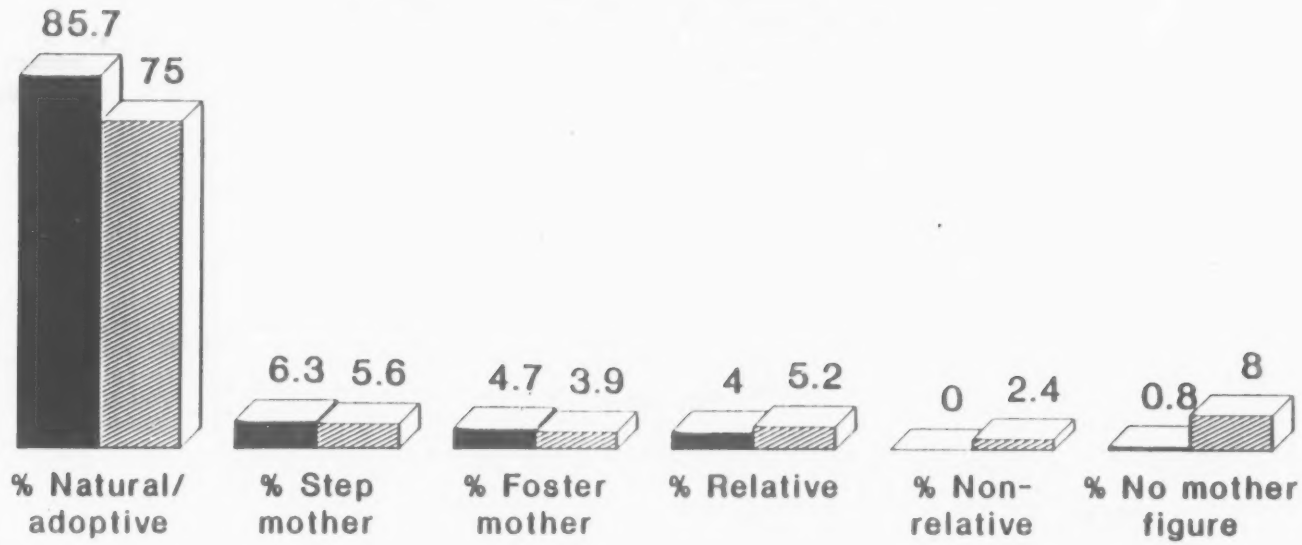


Exhibit 5D.3

Family structures

Father figure identified by youth
Comparison with YIF data

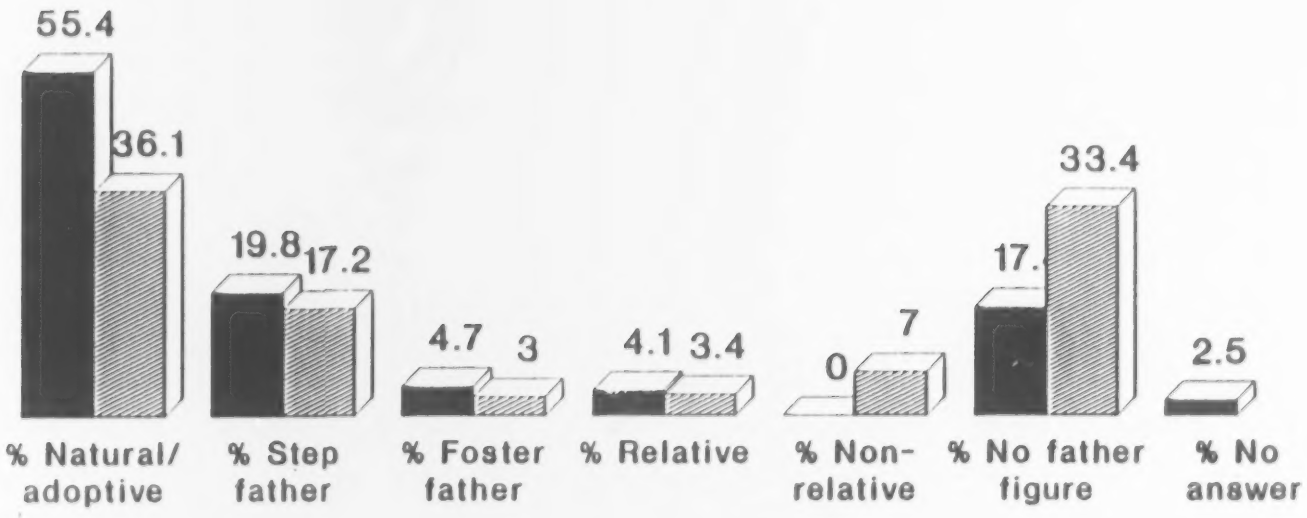


Exhibit SD.4

147

186

187

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study results clearly indicate that the lives of most youth have improved since the time that they stayed at the RHYC. For some, the stay appears to have been the pivotal point that accounts for many of these changes; for others the improvement may have come about simply through maturity, as the outcome of later interventions, or as a result of changes within their families. The study, designed to determine changes, was not designed to analyze the underlying causes of the changes.

Most of the youth who were interviewed are faring well. A review of the various change indicators show that approximately three-fourths of the youth improved in most aspects of their lives, regardless of whether or not there had been a prior problem. About the same proportion also state that their lives are better than they were at the time they went to the RHYC. Although most of the youth report improvement, there is also a small core group whose situation has worsened.

There are also some youth (not necessarily those whose overall condition worsened), who are experiencing new problems at the time of the interview that they had not been experiencing prior to the RHYC stay. In many ways, this is Not surprising. The youth are older, and are statistically at greater risk for dropping out of school, being arrested, becoming pregnant, etc. What is surprising is the fact that the youth report a decrease in alcohol and drug use. The immediate reaction is that their responses are not truthful. In any research of this kind, this is of course a definite possibility. However, this

possibility must be weighed against the apparent honesty and candor displayed by the youth in response to other sensitive questions.

Below is a brief summary of how the youth have fared in each of the 12 areas. Exhibit 6.1 shows the youth's improvement rating for 11 of the 12 areas of functioning and well-being (for all but the section of sexual behavior).

1. Housing. Less than half the youth had the same living arrangement at the time of the interview as prior to going to the RHYC and immediately thereafter. Most of these youth returned to the home of at least one parent. In all, sixty-two percent of the youth are living with a parent at the time of the interview. This number includes ten youth who seem to alternate between the separate homes of both parents.

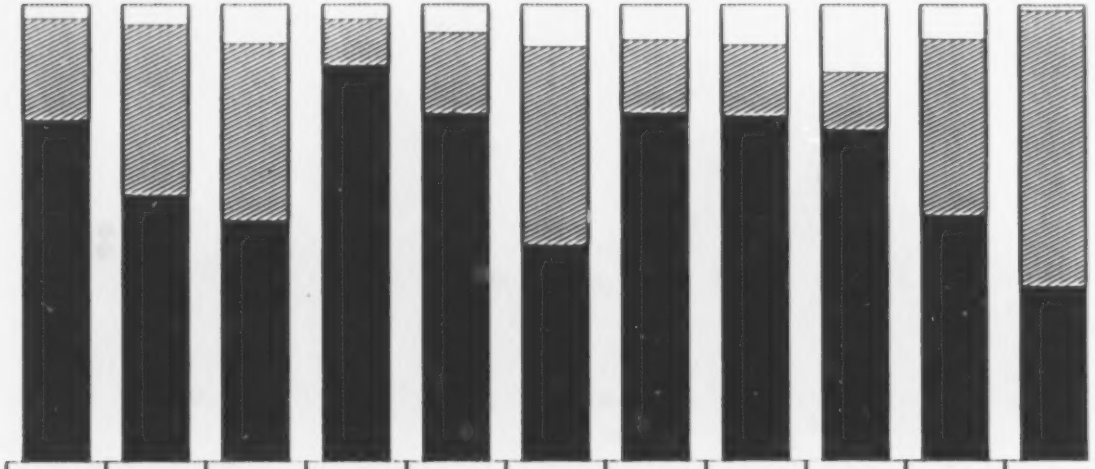
Other housing situations, at the time of the interview include living with a spouse, other relatives, friends or foster parents or living in a group home, runaway shelter, residential treatment center, boarding school, maternity home, college dormitory or jobs corps facility.

None of the youth appear to be homeless at the time of the interview (prior to going to the RHYC at least two youth reported living on the street and in a car). It is not clear whether the five youth who report living alone have adult supervision.

Overall, only eight youth say that their housing situation has worsened. For 22 youth, it has remained the same; for 96 youth it has improved.

2. Family situation. Over three-fourths of the youth say that conflict with parents is either not a problem or only a minor problem. This includes the 59 youth who, prior to the stay at the RHYC, rated conflict with parents

Changes in social functioning
and well-being since stay at RHYC
Based on ratings by youth (N=127)



	School	Work	Fin. sec.	Family	Housing	Phys. hlth	Ment. hlth	Alc./ drugs	Juv. just.	Phys. abuse	Preg-nancy
Worse	4	3	11	4	8	12	10	10	11	1	1
The same	28	24	49	12	22	55	20	17	9	5	41
Better	95	38	67	105	96	60	97	84	53	7	26

N of youth varies by area of functioning

Exhibit 6.1

as a "major" or "moderate" problem. Overall, the youth are living in households where, with the exception of housing problems (experienced at both points in time by 11 percent of the families), there have been significantly fewer stressful events in the time since they left the RHYC.

The overwhelming majority, 105 youth, say that their family situation has improved. For 12 youth, it has remained the same. It has worsened for only 4 youth.

3. Physical or sexual abuse. There has been definite decrease in the proportion of youth who report sexual abuse, defined as "someone doing something sexual to you against your will." Twenty-eight percent report that sexual abuse happened to them some time prior to their stay at the RHYC, including during earlier periods of their childhood. Nine percent report being sexually abused in the time since they left the RHYC.

In general there appears to have been a decline in physical abuse (by anyone, family member or outsider) from 19 percent prior to the stay at the RHYC to nine percent since then. However, if one looks only at abuse by a family member, there is less of a decrease: 13 percent report prior to the RHYC stay and 11 percent since that time.

Thirteen of the youth with a prior history of abuse answered a question regarding change in their situation. Only seven of the 13 youth say that their situation has improved. Five youth say that it has remained the same, and one youth say it has become worse.

4. Financial security. The majority of the youth, both prior to the RHYC stay and at the time of the interview, are supported either by their parents

(79 percent at the time of the interview) or through other legal means such as employment or welfare benefits. At the time of the interview, none of the youth report panhandling or hustling as a means of support.

For most of the majority (104 youth) having money for necessities is not a major problem at the time of the interview. However, since the stay at the RHYC, this has been a problem for 19 percent of the youth (a slight decrease from the 24 percent for whom this was a problem prior to the RHYC stay).

Only 11 percent of the youth say that financial security represents a "major" or "moderate" problem. For the other youth, the situation has either remained the same (49 youth) or improved (67 youth).

5. **Education**. Three-fourths of the youth say that their school situation has improved. At the time of the interview, 112 youth are either in school (103 youth) or have graduated or obtained a GED (9 youth). Twenty-seven of the 35 youth with prior education problems (youth who had dropped out, had been expelled or were skipping classes) are enrolled in school on a regular basis or have graduated.

However, the overall dropout rate has increased from seven percent prior to the RHYC stay to 11 percent at the time of the interview.

6. **Employment**. At the time of the interview, 40 percent of the youth are working (it was not determined whether these are full or part-time jobs). This is a decrease from the 57 percent who say that they were working prior to going to the RHYC. Of 24 youth who have either graduated or dropped out of school, 13 are employed at the time of the interview.

The question regarding improvement in their employment situation was asked of 66 youth. Only four youth say that their situation has worsened. For over half of the youth (38 youth), employment has improved. It has remained the same for 24 of the 66 youth.

7. **Physical health.** More youth rate their health as being "good" or "excellent" at the time of the interview (107 youth) than at the time they went to the RHYC (89 youth). Nevertheless, about the same number of youth list health problems at the time of the interview (24 youth) as at the time of the RHYC stay (20 youth).

Over half of the youth say that they get regular medical care (60 percent report getting a check-up in the past year) and dental care (66 percent). Most report usually getting enough to eat (109) youth, but only about half of the youth (55 percent) say that their diet is good.

Overall, 60 youth say that their health has improved since the time they went to the RHYC, nearly the same number say it has remained the same (this includes youth with no prior health problems), and 12 youth say that their health has deteriorated.

8. **Mental health.** Overall, there appears to be a high level of depression among these youth as evidenced by the high rate of suicide attempts and hospitalizations for mental illness. The rate of suicide attempts prior to the youth's stay at the RHYC was 32 percent. For the months since then, it is 14 percent. Although this is a definite decline, it remains relatively high.

Overall, three fourths of the youth say that their mental health has improved. In order to get a sense of their mental distress at the time of the

interview, the youth were asked a number of questions derived from the Denver Mental Health Assessment. Findings show that on the whole the youth are quite angry. Fifty-three percent said that in the past month they were "often" or "almost" always angry. In addition, 28 percent said at sometime in the past month they felt like they didn't want to go on living.

9. **Substance abuse**. The youth report an overall decline in substance abuse. Thirty-one of the 100 youth who were using alcohol prior to their stay at the RHYC say that they have not had a drink since then. This means that 40 youth (37% of 127) have not drank alcohol since leaving the RHYC, or, conversely, that 63 report use. These youth report a general decline in frequency of use with only 9 youth reporting daily or weekly use. Prior to going to the RHYC, 29 youth reported daily or weekly use.

Drug use shows a similar reduction in use. Forty-eight percent say that prior to going to the RHYC they did not use illegal drugs. At the time of the interview, this number has increased to 67 percent.

Involvement in drug dealing has also decreased. However, at the time of the interview 11 of the 17 youth who report previously dealing drugs are still involved in dealing.

11. **Sexual behavior**. At the time of the interview, 103 youth (81%) report being sexually active (this is an increase from the 59 percent who report being sexually behavior prior to the RHYC stay). On the whole, the youth appear to be aware of AIDS risk taking behavior. Forty three percent say that the RHYC taught them how to protect themselves against AIDS. Over two thirds of the sexually active youth (69%) say that they use condoms. Most of these youth also mention other safe sex practices including: having a

steady partner or reducing the number of partners. However, it should be noted that the term "steady partner" was not defined. Nor were any questions asked regarding the number of partners.

12. Pregnancy and parenthood. Twice as many young women (17 of the 82 females) have become pregnant in the months since the RHYC stay as were pregnant prior to their stay. On the whole, however, these pregnant young women are doing well, they are getting prenatal care, and all but one say that their situation has improved.

While it is encouraging to note that at the time of the interview so many youth are doing better than when they entered the RHYC, it is distressing to see that for a small group of youth their lives have become more difficult and stressful. A comparison was made between the quartile of youth who at the time of the interview had the greatest number of negative outcomes and all the other youth who were interviewed. It shows that the youth least likely to "succeed" were more likely than the other youth to have entered the RHYCs with either a history of child abuse, parental conflict or health problems. While some of the "successful" youth also entered with these problems, but were able to resolve some of them, it is possible that for some youth there is a need for even more intervention and assistance in successfully resolving major life problems.

For some the RHYC seems to have served as a timely safety valve at a time of crisis. Many are quite explicit that the stay at the RHYC allowed them a chance to sit back and recognize their feelings, to understand their parents' perspective, or to learn new conflict management skills. Some say it kept them from "destroying" themselves through drugs or suicide. However, for

others, the link between their current lives and their stay at the RHYC is less clear. Nor can it be fully explored within the context of this study which is a first attempt to find out what happens to these youth over time.

Since the youth's stay at the shelter is generally brief, there is no expectation that the services offered during that time will provide a resolution for all problems. Aftercare services are offered to help youth deal more completely with their problems. However, the information collected from the sites, as well as information collected from the youth, indicates that youth do not often take advantage of these aftercare services. Perhaps better outreach or follow-up efforts would increase the participation of the youth in the aftercare services.

Along with a need for increased participation in aftercare services is a need for broader participation in the RHYC services. Many of the RHYCs are located in remote areas, away from transportation and easy visibility. The majority of the youth get to the RHYCs through referrals from other agencies--juvenile justice systems, law enforcement agencies and child welfare or protective service agencies. It is quite possible that many youth who could benefit from the RHYC services are not in contact with these agencies and therefore never find out about the RHYC services. Possibly increased visibility and outreach would help attract youth who otherwise turn to the streets and the street culture to survive.

According to the data collected from RHYCs, approximately 40 percent of their clients are runaways and somewhat less than 18 percent are homeless. Possibly one-half of the youth staying at RHYCs are placements of the child welfqare system. The implications of this are that RHYCs are serving as

"temporary" foster placements. According to RHYC staff, many of the kids placed in the RHYC before going to foster homes have been placed in multiple homes without lasting success. Runaway and homeless youth centers were not established to serve as institutions for youth in need of foster care. The main mission of the RHYC is reunification of families and the services are meant to be temporary and focused on resolving the youth's major presenting problems. As an increasing number of beds are used for foster care youth, it is possible that RHYCs directors who have not already done so, may have to re-examine their missions and their services.

As the number of the foster placements increases, one begins to question its growth. Interviews with child welfare agency staff revealed that these agencies are seeing an increasing number of very young children in need of immediate intervention and in order to function, the agencies must set priorities for their services. Youth over 12 or 13 years of age are not a priority, regardless of the degree of their problems. While such ploicies are reasonable when costs must be contained and the needs keep growing, these very policies may be helping to increase the number of youth who have no options and therefore run from home. Since, as RHYCs reported, the major referral source is juvenile justice, law enforcement and child welfare agencies, perhaps these older youth are being referred to the RHYCs—but only if they contact one of the above agencies. If not, they may remain at home, may find out from friends about the RHYC services and run to the RHYC or may run elsewhere. This all suggests a need to respond to the problems that youth in early adolescence experience, which may lead to their running away from home--whether they run to a RHYC or to the streets.

In conclusion, the data suggest that RHYCs are providing a multitude of services and are able to help a majority of their clients improve their situations. Much remains to be done to both prevent the initial crises which prompt youth to run and to help promote a stable living situation to keep them from running again.

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